



CMR

COMMUNITY
MEDIA REVIEW

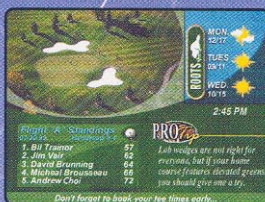
COMMUNITY MEDIA & CONVERGENCE

*The Medium Is
Not the Message*

THE JOURNAL OF THE ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA • WINTER 2000

Broadcast Narrowcast Webcast

Now you can do it all in one.



Resorts



Sports



TV/Web based Real Estate



Hotels



Infomercials



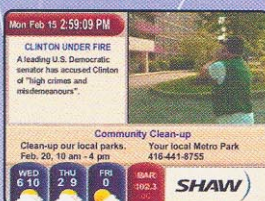
TV Listings



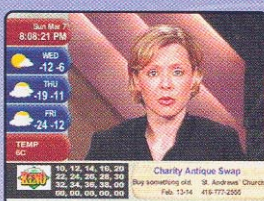
Shopping Malls



Universities



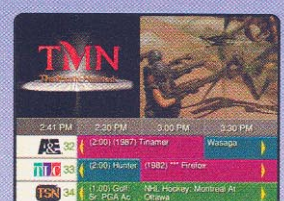
Cable TV L/O



Local News



PPV Barkers



TV Listings

We would like to introduce you to MediaMake, the most advanced multimedia system in the world. Just tell us your application and we'll provide you with your own TV Channel or Network with a searchable, companion website. MediaMake is easy to own and operate, has delivered over 800 channels on air and comes with a money back guarantee. Come let us show you why North America's leading communications organizations are using MediaMake to produce turnkey TV/web systems.

For a personalized demonstration please call **Bil Trainor** at **905-946-1122 x 223** or contact us through our website at www.capitalnetworks.com.



CAPITAL NETWORKS LIMITED

620 Alden Road, Unit 103, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 9R7

Tel: (905) 946-1122 x 223 • Fax: (905) 946-1144 • email: info@capitalnetworks.com

Product names mentioned herein may be trademarks and/or registered trademarks of their respective companies

We get around.

First Amendment Center programs present free expression issues in fresh and unique ways—from concerts featuring John Kay and Tom Paxton to interviews with social activist Dick Gregory and feminist author bell hooks. Programs feature cutting-edge First Amendment issues like internet censorship, violent video games, prayer in public schools and the news media in today's society. Information and education—not just talking heads.

And it's all made available **free** of charge and in the format that you need by the First Amendment Center—part of the non-profit non-partisan foundation The Freedom Forum.

For more information about how you can add these valuable programs to your station's news and information lineup, contact:


Didi DeBolt

First Amendment Center
615-321-9588



**FIRST
AMENDMENT
CENTER**

FUNDED BY THE FREEDOM FORUM



*The right
technology
gives the power to
succeed!*

FrameRate's powerful technology combines systems and software that allow you to create, edit, and manage programming on your PEG Access Channel. You can now capture material from a variety of media sources, edit and preview the content, and create a schedule for seamless transitions in playback.

If you've ever considered launching your own channel as a practical way to inform those you serve, our expertise will be an invaluable resource throughout the process. Then, our continuing support and training will ensure success and bring public awareness as your channel becomes an integral component of your public service package.

So if your vision of the future includes a successful PEG channel, contact FrameRate for references (yes, references) and an analysis that will offer the best approach for getting started. We'll make it our mission.

 **FrameRate®**
800.579.8247
www.framerate.com

Your Vision
Our Mission

CMR

COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

WINTER 2000
VOLUME 23, NUMBER 4
CMR EDITORIAL BOARD

Dirk Koning, *Chair*
Pat Garlinghouse, *Information Services Chair*
Betty Francis, Jeffrey Hansell, Lucille Frasca
Harrigan, John Higgins, Jennifer A. Krebs

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF THIS ISSUE
Lucille Frasca Harrigan

MANAGING EDITOR
Tim Goodwin

NATIONAL OFFICE
Bunnie Riedel, *Executive Director*
Matthew Bennett, *Government
Relations/Communications*
Felicia Brown, *Membership/Operations*

ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Paul D. Berg, Karyn G. Chalmers,
Frank Clark, Ron Cooper, John Donovan,
Pat Garlinghouse, Harry Haasch,
David Hawksworth, Ric Hayes,
James Horwood, Serena Mann, Erik Möllberg,
Miguel Ortega, John Rocco, Debby Rogers,
James C. Rossi, Jr., Ken Snider,
Karen Toering, Greg Vawter, David Vogel



Alliance
for
Community
Media

Community Media Review [ISSN 1074-9004] is published quarterly by the Alliance for Community Media, Inc. Subscriptions \$35 a year. Please send subscriptions, memberships, address changes, advertising and editorial inquiries to the Alliance for Community Media, 666 11th St. NW, Suite 740, Washington, DC 20001-4542. Telephone 202.393.2650 voice, 202.393.2653 fax. Email: acm@alliancecm.org or visit the Alliance for Community Media website at www.alliancecm.org

Requests for bulk orders considered in advance of publication. Contact the national office for rates and delivery.

Copyright ©2000 by the Alliance for Community Media, Inc. Prior written permission of the Alliance for Community Media required for all reprints or usage.

Produced through the studios of



IN THIS ISSUE

OPENERS

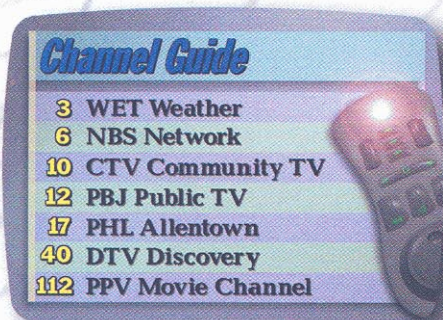
- The Promise of Converged Technology, *Bunnie Riedel* **5**
Determining the Future of Digital Technology, *Ric Hayes* **7**
Alliance National Board listing **9**

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

- Community Media & Convergence: The Medium
Is Not the Message, *Lucille Frasca Harrigan* **9**
The Next Communications Revolution, *Bunnie Riedel* **13**
The Untapped Potential of Authentic
TV Town Meetings, *Ted Becker* **16**
The Tilt of the Tube, *Jeffrey Scheuer* **17**
Interactive P•E•G, *Andrew Afflerbach, Ph.D.* **20**
Creating Public Space in the Public's Interest,
Autumn Rabbe-Renault **23**
Sharing Our Visions on Digital Convergence,
Malden [MA] High School Students **24**
Bridging the Digital Divide, *Felicia M. Sullivan* **25**
Berks Community TV: Interactive Since 1976, *Ann Sheehan* **26**
The Web Goes Mobile, *Linda Troyer* **27**
No More Borders, No More Miles in the
Networked GeoCommunity, *Chuck Sherwood* **28**
Freedom & Community: Staying
Relevant in the Digital Age, *Dirk Koning* **29**

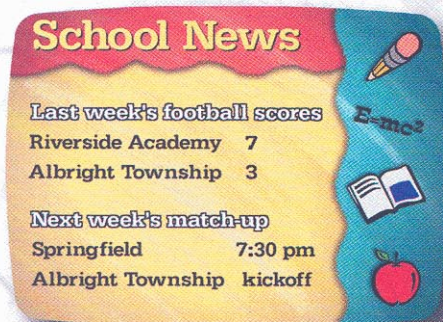
As the journal of the Alliance for Community Media, Community Media Review shall support the Alliance mission by providing: a comprehensive overview of past, present and future issues critical to the Alliance and its membership; vigorous and thoughtful debate on those issues; and a venue for members and like-minded groups to present issues critical to the Alliance.

Create, Schedule & Run InfoChannel®



Channel Listings & News

Easily create and update professional looking programs. Promote your public access pay-per-view and premium channels.



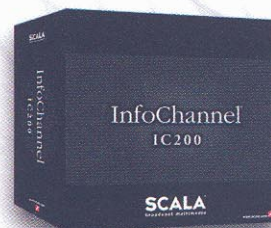
Community Access & Schools

Improve the quality and image of your channel with the included content library and array of effects and transitions.

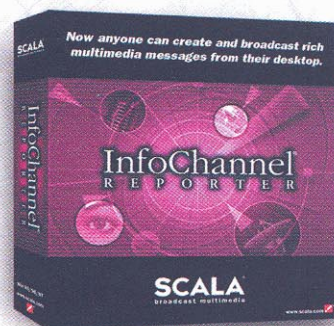


Photo Advertising

Schedule and track an unlimited number of ads. Maximize your advertising revenue.



InfoChannel is a complete production system for making your own multimedia TV channels. It's a flexible and easy to use tool to create professional broadcast quality programming in a snap. Integrate text, graphics, video and sound, then schedule and run from a desktop PC. **Anyone can do it!**



New Product! InfoChannel Reporter.

Reporter enables anyone to easily create and update multimedia messages on their InfoChannel system using a standard networked PC. With Reporter's Windows®-based template interface, anyone in an organization can become a news editor with minimal time and training.

Scala is now offering training classes for InfoChannel IC200!

Learn how to create dynamic InfoChannel scripts during a two-day IC200 workshop. This hands-on workshop will give you the knowledge and confidence in authoring, sound, video, animation, scheduling and networking.

\$695 Price includes:

- All course materials
- Take home CD ROM including the course materials covered, free Reporter templates and free Scala backgrounds
- Lunch
- Workshop is limited to 20 participants
- Group discounts: When three enroll from your organization, a fourth attends FREE!

For Sales Information call: 888-SCALA96
or visit our website at www.scala.com



The Promise of Converged Technology

Address to General Session, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA), September 15, 2000
Regal Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles

by **Bunnie Riedel**

The promise of converged technology—interactive, always-on, internet television—has been largely discussed in the trade papers and at the FCC in purely commercial terms. That is why having this discussion here at NATOA, at the Alliance for Community Media's national conference and various other gatherings of civic and social groups is extremely important. In this room are people whose vocation it is to concern themselves not just with commercial enterprise, but with the extraordinary enterprise of building community and enhancing the quality of life.

In his book *The Sound Bite Society*, Jeffrey Scheuer talks about convergence. "The main features of this heralded 'communications revolution' appear to be fourfold: aesthetics, convenience, choice and interactivity. Digital high definition TV will improve audiovisual fidelity. But this is no more revolutionary than the advent of color TV or of compact and DVD disks. A second benefit (aside from consolidating household furniture) will be data on demand: a new level of consumer choice and convenience in terms of accessing, scheduling and manipulating the information stream...It is unclear whether interactivity can yield more than an expanded menu of choices or a vehicle for advertisers to customize their pitch to your personal consumption habits. While it would be foolish to minimize the importance of this convergence, it's far from clear that the content of the programming, or the essential character of the viewing experience, will be drastically altered."

The July 10th issue of *Broadcasting and Cable* was dedicated to the subject of interactive television and whether it will deliver on its promises. Right now it is poised to deliver customers directly to marketers in what the industry calls the "walled garden." The walled garden is where the viewer/consumer and their respective eyeballs are so entertained by so much rich content that they will spend

It is not the responsibility of the industry to come to us and create a civic, social and educational vision of the future of converged technology. It is our responsibility to create that vision and to be persistent until we make it a reality... It is an extraordinary enterprise. But not one which is foreign to you.



hours in front of their converged television sets—surfing the web, video chatting with others who share their interests, ordering products or signing up for free promotions—and with each step, their choices will bekerneled, cookied and catalogued and that information used to improve target marketing. But no mention is made in *Broadcasting and Cable* or hardly any other trade publication for that matter, of the civic, social and educational uses of this converged technology.

That is where you come in. We must ensure that the technology is not the end unto itself but that it is the means to an end. We must envision it as the vehicle, rather than the destination.

Imagine the non-commercial uses of convergence as empowering citizens to participate in governance more fully, providing new opportunities for education and job training, delivering essential knowledge so that seniors can easily access assistance, parents can be alerted to vaccination clinics, teenagers can be invited to civic after school activities, commuters can find out whether the trains are running on time, residents can be reminded to register to vote and eventually vote through their TV sets, and so on.

Imagine taking what many of you already provide in government access and expanding it fully, interactively, so that you can maximize the delivery of services and information. The chief of police hosts a weekly "safe neighborhoods" program in which he/she is able to interact in real time with residents via video capability; introducing residents face-to-face to community policemen; providing information on events, crime, department hiring, home

security, etc. Residents can instantly sign up for a home safety check, download fact sheets on auto insurance requirements or licensing, alert the department to school crosswalk problems, pick from a menu of previous programs of interest and accompanying data, sign up to receive information on any law enforcement or safety subject delivered as voice, video and data.

Apply your imagination to various agencies and their need to communicate more fully with residents whether it is the health department; parks and recreation; animal control; fire department; licensing; city or county council. Apply this to the delivery of education, whether it is K through 12, GED, technical school, college or university. Apply this to non-profit entities being able to deliver their services and information more efficiently. Apply this to public discourse, giving voice to minorities and second language communities, the disabled, the young and the old, the disenfranchised and the poor, the artistic, the political and the religious.

Contrast these community uses to industry plans. Imagine you are watching a show about Charles Lindbergh and you decide you want more information, so you click on an icon to get that information and immediately there is an airline advertisement for non-stop transatlantic flights to Paris (just like Lindbergh's). Now that you have shown an interest the next time you turn on the TV you will see an ad for a bomber jacket (just like Lindbergh's) or maybe motion sickness medicine (for that long flight) or perhaps home security services (since you will be out of town) or maybe life insurance (anything could happen on your trip). You wanted bio-

graphical information on an historical figure, instead you got targeted. This is hardly the “techno revolution” we are being told will change the way we interact with one another—instead it is a way to take what is truly promising and inventive and choke its potential to make any kind of difference in any of our lives at all.

What then is our imperative for capitalizing on this technology and using it in ways that will make a difference—can’t we already do many of these things via internet and our access programming? The imperative will be the convergence of all these capabilities into one and the delivery of these capabilities through the most familiar and pernicious of systems—the TV. Our old friend.

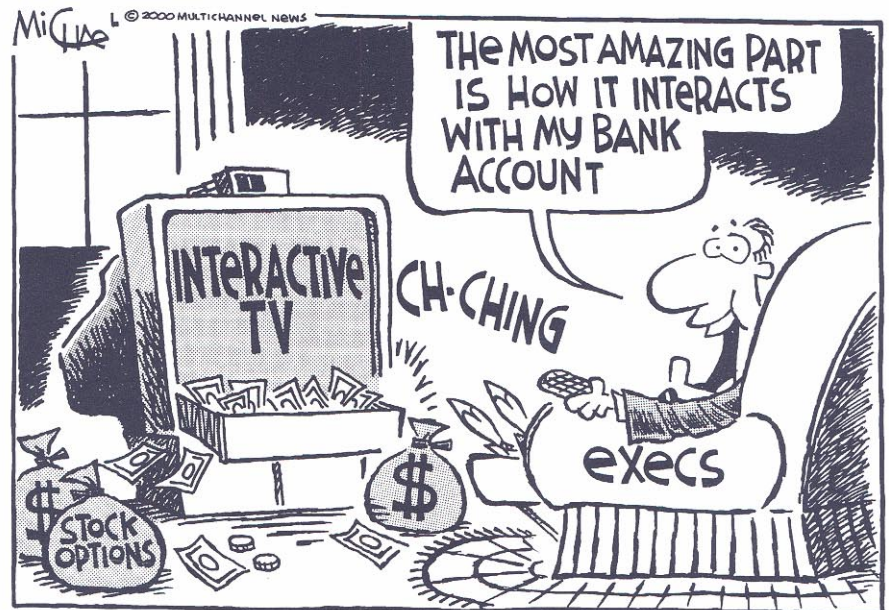
It is a seamless transition from simply “watching tv” to directly interacting with the providers of the content—giving us the the ability to manipulate the way information is received—and how we transmit information. The good old television set as a multi-tasking voice, video and data communications tool.

I believe that this next step in our communications capabilities has the potential for ameliorating the isolationist character of our television and our computer. It certainly will bring us face to face with one another. For good or bad, we will have to invent a new protocol for how we use these communication devices to speak to one another...it’s one thing to be just a voice on the phone, it’s quite another to have someone actually looking at you as you throw a fit about your recent water bill.

Inherent in this promise are problems which must be addressed—and they must be addressed by you and others who labor in the public interest.

1. Privacy Issues. We will be able to market our civic, social and educational products in exactly the same way as the industry. We will be able to cookie, kernel and catalogue. We will be able to data harvest. But should we? How will we maximize our delivery of information and yet protect the privacy of the individual?

I imagine being able to remind residents it’s time for a blood pressure screening, or a pet vaccination, or being able to identify future community volunteers and send them a reminder video if they wish to be reminded. But we must have safeguards in place to ensure that any personal information is given willingly and used only as



REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF LEO MICHAEL AND MULTICHANNEL NEWS

the individual intended it to be—not shared—not transmitted—not sold for profit.

2. What will be the capability of the pipeline and who will control content?

We have been told there will be unlimited space, but industry publications lead me to believe that as quickly as space is available it will be consumed by richer and richer voice, video and data content. Nature and industry abhor a vacuum and uses will become more complex, requiring more and more megahertz, creating scarcity for all but the few who got there first and the few who have the money to stay put.

Article after article refers to propriety content agreements which are now being hammered out, domestically and internationally—caching near the curbside, near the user—content control and content speed delivery—this is exactly the complaint Disney has toward the AOL/Time Warner merger and what has prompted the European Union toward greater scrutiny of that merger. Broadcasters are now saying they want must carry provisions for their data. If Disney and the broadcasters are worried, so should we be. Will we in PEG be so slow or so late to develop our vision that by the time we get there...there won’t be a “there” there?

The recent decision by the Vermont Public Utilities Board to require the reservation of 10 percent of the broadband capacity for Public, Educational and Governmental access use is something we should all pay heed to. A percentage of

capacity allows PEG to grow as the technology grows rather than being handcuffed by hard channel allocation. In the ruling, Vermont said, “In the climate of impending maneuvering for analog and digital signals, channel allocations and transition of consumer equipment, one goal is to assure that local Public, Educational and Governmental access neither be subjugated to an analog ghetto or jettisoned to a digital Siberia.”

Our commitment must be to using the technology with all its bells and whistles to further those things we believe are important: building community, transmitting knowledge, enhancing the quality of life for our citizens, promoting democratic discourse, solving community problems of crime, crowding, transportation, pollution, education, health, and so on.

It is not the responsibility of the industry to come to us and create a civic, social and educational vision of the future of converged technology. It is our responsibility to create that vision and to be persistent until we make it a reality.

It is an extraordinary enterprise. But not one which is foreign to you. You, as members of NATOA, are at the forefront of considering the public interest. You are charged with weighing the needs of industry and the needs of our communities, so that all can be rewarded and served. And I have every confidence that what you do over the next few years during this transition to convergence will mirror what you have always done...that is build community and enhance the quality of our lives.

Determining the Future of Digital Technology

by Ric Hayes

Since this is my first *CMR* article as the new chair of the Alliance Board of Directors, allow me to introduce myself. Over the past twenty years I have worked as a manager of access television centers. Throughout that time I volunteered with the Alliance; writing newsletters or helping organize conferences and video festivals for the Central States Region, and for the past four years I have served as a national board member. Along the way I have obtained both a Bachelors and a Master degree in Public Administration. I currently work for the Miami Valley Cable Council, a municipal organization that serves eight cities in the southern suburbs of Dayton, Ohio. As the director of cable operations I oversee the production and programming for our PEG access channels and am involved in the provision of Internet and other services.

The theme of this issue of *CMR* encourages us to ponder the future of technology and how it can be used to improve the quality of life in our communities.

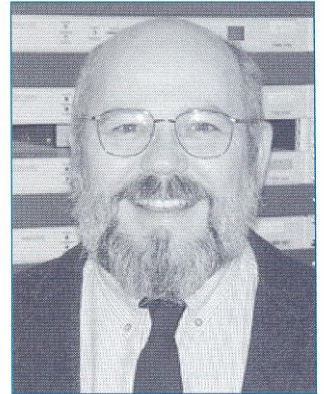
As individuals we struggle to keep up with the rapidly changing media environment and the alphabet soup of jargon. We are aware of the waves of change beating against the shores of our hometowns, but can we recognize an underlying significance? If we could read the shapes in the sand like tea leaves we might conjecture that the future of technology will be digital and interactive.

Talking about the future isn't just a diversion to pass the time, but a vital need we all have, both as individuals and as staff of media centers. The need to forecast the future is crucial for our capital budget planning and our need to use our limited financial resources to select the right production equipment and establish new directions for training.

Posing the right questions to ask may be a useful practice. What will be the winning format in our digital media centers? Will it be DV or DVCPro, what about DVD? Will the transmission standards be 8-SVSB or COFDM? Will commercial forces define the future of interactive

Many access centers are already providing a broader delivery of services, blending television, computer, radio or other technology training.

These community media centers have begun to transform themselves into the community action media centers of the future.



technology, and will the concealed carnivores devour freedom of speech? How will citizens maintain their individuality, their privacy and avoid becoming treated as just another series of 1s and 0s.

A common method of dealing with the future is to base our future decisions on the past. When I look back, one thing I see is that our community programming has been a crucial aspect of what made the cable television industry successful. Across this country today there are thousands of local community cable channels. They are defined as LO, Public, Education, Government, Religious, Community and by other terms. The style of administration is just as varied. It includes cable operators, libraries, schools, colleges and a multitude of non-profit corporations. In every case it was our community organizing efforts and our commitment to empowering the individual that made the difference. We didn't just teach people to make television, we encouraged people to understand the media environment for themselves.

Empowerment was not just a word in a mission statement; it is the thread that ties all access centers together. When we trained someone to use a camera and editing gear to tell their story, or when we worked with volunteers to provide city council coverage, we taught them that technology can serve a purpose other than just the commercially defined one, and they were an active participant in making that true.

Just as we helped our communities learn to use the tools of cable television, there are other roles for us to play in cop-

ing with the coming waves of change. Many access centers are already providing a broader delivery of services, blending television, computer, radio or other technology training. These community media centers have begun to transform themselves into the community action media centers of the future. By doing so, they expand their service to their community and perform a vital research and development function for us all. As they build public access computer labs and webstream their access channels in real-time we can all learn from their successes and failures.

In the long run we know that digital technology is an unstoppable force, and when it reaches the apex of its interactive powers it will be a powerful tool for social change. It can provide social goods such as electronic balloting and may have other democratizing influences. But it will also be a powerful commercial medium providing mobile computer systems, cell phones and Internet appliances that can connect your hand-held unit to your refrigerator. Only time will tell whether these tools will be used to assist people to develop their full potential or whether they will be used to control and limit our choices.

As always, I look forward to working with everyone in the community media field to create a future where technology is applied to community needs.

Ric Hayes is chairman of the Alliance for Community Media and director of cable operations for Miami Valley Cable Council in Centerville, Ohio. Email rhayes@mvcc.net, telephone 937.438.8887 x3025.

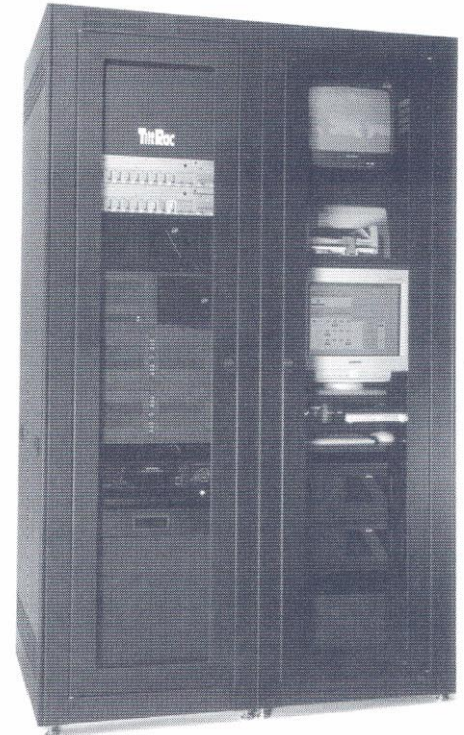
PEG~i~SYS

The Intelligent Station Management System for Today's PEG Operators

PEG~i~SYS is the new, intelligent, interactive PEG station management solution for Public, Education and Government Cable Access Channels from TILTRAC.

PEG~i~SYS includes hardware and software components designed for today's PEG operator.

- Digital Server and Encoding Systems
- Tape Automation Systems
- VCR Control
- Digital VCR's
- Station Automation Software
- Digital Video Archive Solutions
- Internet Access
- Web Casting
- Video On-Demand



PEG~i~SYS offers:

- Complete station automation
- 24/7 operating capability with limited staff
- Router Control
- Remote Access and Error Paging
- Traffic Manager Interface
- Web Interface
- Schedule Publishing to Web Pages and Character Generator
- Plus many other features

TILTRAC

Automated Media Systems

3353 Earhart Drive, Suite 212, Carrollton, TX 75006
Toll Free: 800-601-6991, Phone: 972-980-6991, Fax: 972-980-6994
<http://www.tiltrac.com>

2000-2001 ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ric Hayes **Chair, At Large**
Director of Cable Operations,
Miami Valley Cable Council
968A Great View Circle
Centerville, OH 45459
Voice: 937.438.8887 x3025 / Fax: 937.438.8569
Email: rhayes@mvcc.net

Harry Haasch **Vice Chair, At Large**
Community Television Network
425 S. Main, Suite LL 114
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Voice: 734.994.1833 / Fax: 734.994.8731
Email: hhaasch@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us

David Hawksworth **Secretary**
Executive Director,
Community Access Television of Salina
410 W. Ash St.
Salina, KS 67402
Voice: 785.823.2500 / Fax: 785.823.2599
Email: daveh@salnet.org

Kevin Reynolds **Treasurer, At-Large**
Northeast Regional Treasurer
5520 North Bloomfield Rd.
Canandaigua, NY 14424
Voice: 716.394.3028
Email: reynolds@netacc.net

REGIONAL CHAIRS

Erik Möllberg **Central States Chair,
Chair of Chairs**
Channel 10 Public Access
900 Webster St.
Ft. Wayne IN 46802
Voice: 219.421.1248 / Fax: 219.422.9688
Email: emollberg@acpl.lib.in.us

James C. Rossi, Jr. **Mid-Atlantic Chair**
C-Net
123 South Burrowes St., #304
State College, PA 16801
Voice: 814.238.5031 / Fax: 814.238.5368
jrossi@vicon.net

David Vogel **Southeast Chair**
CTV Of Knoxville
912 S. Gay St. #600
Knoxville, TN 37902
Voice: 865.521.7475 / Fax: 865.971.4517
Email: david@communityknox.org

Patricia Garlinghouse **Southwest Chair**
Houston MediaSource
3900 Milam
Houston, TX 77006
Voice: 713.524.7700, x13 / Fax: 713.524.3823
Email: patg@houston-mediasource.org

Ken Snider **Northwest Chair**
Multnomah Community Television
26000 SE Stark St.
Gresham, OR 97030
Voice: 503.491.7636, x325 / Fax: 503.491.7417
Email: ken@mctv.org

Ron Cooper **Western States Chair**
Access Sacramento
4623 T St., Ste. A
Sacramento, CA 95819
Voice: 916.456.8600 x112 / Fax: 916.451.9601

AT-LARGE

John A. Rocco **Board/Personnel Chair**
Executive Director, DATV
280 Leo St.
Dayton, OH 45404-2827
Voice: 937.223.5311 / Fax: 937.223.2345
Email: 102546.526@compuserv.com

Debby Rogers **Conference Planning Chair**
Executive Director
Falmouth Community Television
310 B Dillingham Ave.
Falmouth, MA 02540
Voice: 508.457.0800 / Fax: 508.457.1604
Email: deb@fctv.org

Frank Clark
Citicable
801 Plum St., Room 28
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Voice: 513.352.5307 / Fax: 513.352.5347
Email: frank.clark@cincable.rcc.org

Paul D. Berg
Newton Communications Access Center
PO Box 610192.
Newton, MA 02161-0192
Voice: 617.965.7200 / Fax: 617.965.5677
Email: paul.berg@worldnet.att.net

Serena Mann
General Manager
Flagship Channel
0121 Tawes Fine Arts Bldg.
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
Voice: 301.405.3610 / Fax: 301.405.0496
Email: smann@deans.umd.edu

Karen Toering
Executive Director
SCAN-Seattle Cable Access Network
1125 N. 98th St.
Seattle, WA 98103
Voice: 206.522.4758 / Fax: 206.528.8049
Email: scandir@home.com

Greg Vawter
Station Manager
Hillsborough Television
County Center-28, PO Box 1110
Tampa, FL 33601-1110
Voice: 813.276.2681 / Fax: 813.276.2691
Email: gvawter1@tampabay.rr.com

DISCRETIONARY APPOINTEES

James Horwood **Legal Affairs Appointee**
Attorney-at-Law
Spiegel & McDiarmid
1350 New York Ave, NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005-4798
Voice: 202.879.4002 / Fax: 202.393.2866
Email: horwoodj@spiegelmc.com

Karyn Chalmers **Equal Opportunity Chair**
Community TV
PO Box 590
Raleigh, NC 27602
Voice: 919.890.3456 / Fax: 919.831.6278
Email: ctv@raleigh-nc.org

Miguel Ortega **Appointee**
Access Tucson
124 East Broadway
Tucson, AZ 85701
Voice: 520.624.9833 / Fax: 520.792.2565
Email: mORTEGA@accessTucson.org

'Talk Amongst Yourselves...'

Information, resources, networking and national office announcements are at your fingertips day or night. The Alliance hosts two listservs to help you:

Those interested in community media (Alliance membership not required), should send notice to subscribe to government@alliancecm.org then sign on to: access-forum@lists.alliancecm.org

Members only, send notice to subscribe to government@alliancecm.org then sign on to: alliance-announce@lists.alliancecm.org

Useful Contacts

Alliance for Community Media
666 11th St. NW, Suite 740
Washington, DC 20001-4542
Telephone 202.393.2650 voice
202.393.2653 fax.
Email: acm@alliancecm.org
www.alliancecm.org

Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20024
202.418.0200 voice
202.418.2812 fax
www.fcc.gov

Your Federal Legislators

The Honorable Sen. _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515
The Honorable Rep. _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510
on the web
<http://clerkweb.house.gov>
or call 202.224.3121

Attention Alliance Members: Looking for value-added programming?

"Airing the Recovery Network in Dayton has positively impacted the community. This is one more level of service to our community that we provide. There are so many people in the viewing area who watch Recovery Network and get help in the privacy of their homes."



Melissa Mills, Program Director
Dayton Access TV/Dayton Spiritual Television

Recovery Network can have an impact in your community too. Contact a representative today!



Brad Parobek
SVP Affiliate Sales & Mktg
303-706-1260

Michael Galer
Eastern Region
617-783-1271

Tim Somers
Central Region
630-690-9303

As this edition goes to press, two sets of headlines underline the vital role of PEG and what should be OUR agenda for the next four years. First, the outcome of the closely fought and bitterly contested election for President underscores more than ever the need for thoughtful dialogue on vital issues and an antidote to heavily financed soundbite campaigning. The second set of headlines relates to the AOL/Time Warner merger, “clearing the way for the creation of the world’s biggest media business.” Whether or not the Federal Trade Commission restrictions on this Godzilla are effective, is yet to be seen.

This edition of *Community Media Review* is intended to raise your sights and stimulate your thinking about the future of PEG in your community, in the nation at large, and as part of a worldwide network of people with the same aims and ideals.

We begin with **Bunnie Riedel’s** November 16 address to the *Sixth Olympiad of the Mind* in Paris, a part of the world media democracy movement.

Ted Becker, who with Christa Slaton is the author of the recently published *The Future of Teledemocracy*, is an advocate of far-reaching changes in the American representative political system that he believes has become outmoded as a result of the revolution in information and communications technology. He shares his views on the untapped potential of TV town meetings and public hearings and suggests ways that PEG channels can use interactive technology to build community consensus on important policy issues.

Jeffrey Scheuer, author of *The Sound Bite Society*, gives a powerful and thoughtful argument against the notion that the media has a liberal or Democratic bias. He maintains that the political left right spectrum is also a spectrum of complexity. Liberal views are inherently more complex than conservative. His indictment of commercial television concludes with a vision of the future “in which television is more independent and serves a more attentive public.”

We asked **Andrew Afflerbach** of Columbia Telecommunications Corporation for a practical “how to” guide for those who want to prepare themselves for the convergence of technologies and the arrival of interactive TV.

Access centers from many states have contributed to our **Sharing Visions** section. As always, *CMR* welcomes your ideas. Contact us at the Alliance.

— *Lucille Harrigan, Guest Editor-in-Chief*

COMMUNITY MEDIA & CONVERGENCE

The Medium Is Not the Message

Lucille Frasca Harrigan taught political science at Montgomery College for a number of years before becoming Legislative Information Coordinator for the Montgomery County (Maryland) Council, where she was in charge of cable programming. Contact her at lharrigan@erols.com

**Lives based on having are less free
than lives based on either doing or being.**

— William James



COMMUNITY MEDIA CENTER

711 BRIDGE ST. • GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49504

616.459.4788 • WWW.GRCMC.ORG

For more than 10 years, the Alliance for Communications Democracy has been fighting to preserve and strengthen access. Though the odds against us have been high, and the mega-media, corporate foes well-heeled and powerful, time and again we've won in the courts. We can't continue this critical work without your support. With the ramifications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act manifesting themselves, and new legislation on the horizon, we must be vigilant if we are to prevail and preserve democratic communications. If not us, who? If not now, when? Please join the Alliance for Communications Democracy today!

AN IMPORTANT INVITATION

ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNICATIONS DEMOCRACY

Become an Alliance Subscriber for \$350/year and receive detailed reports on current court cases threatening access, pertinent historical case citations, and other Alliance for Communications Democracy activities.

- ▶ Voting membership open to non-profit access operations for an annual contribution of \$3,000.
- ▶ Associate, Supporter and Subscriber memberships available to organizations and individuals at the following levels:
 - Alliance Associate, \$2500 - copies of all briefs and reports.
 - Alliance Supporter, \$500 - copies of all reports and enclosures.
 - Alliance Subscriber, \$350 - copies of all reports.

Direct membership inquiries to ACD Treasurer Rob Brading, Multnomah Community Television, 26000 SE Stark St., Gresham, OR 97038, telephone 503.667.7636, or email at rbrading@mctv.org

THE NEXT COMMUNICATIONS CIVILIZATION

by **Bunnie Riedel**

The organization I represent, the Alliance for Community Media, is founded on the simple notion of media democracy. Media democracy strives to ensure everyone's access to electronic media; regardless of the platform, regardless of the delivery system, regardless of the technology. In the United States, this notion is rooted in the constitutional guarantee of free speech. All people have the fundamental right to see, to hear, to speak and to access information regardless of their life circumstances, their political or religious beliefs or their ability to pay.

In working for media democracy, thousands of media activists throughout the United States have succeeded in securing almost 5,000 television channels on cable systems for community use. This reservation of channel capacity has come about because average people worked for a regulatory structure that allows local governments to require cable operators to provide channels for Public, Educational and Governmental use. We call these channels Public, Educational and Governmental access or PEG. Public access is used by individuals and community groups; Educational access is used by school districts, community colleges and universities; Governmental access is used by local government agencies such as police, fire and health departments and for coverage of local government meetings.

Local governments are also able to require a franchise fee of up to five percent of gross revenue from cable operators to fund these operations and they are able to require buildings and equipment through franchise agreements. Unique in this structure is Public access, a forum for individuals and community groups to speak without censorship. This allows individuals and community groups to provide information which may not be provided anywhere else in media. We now have about one million hours each year of original programming being created on Public, Educational and Governmental access. It is a rich tapestry of ideas and creativity, one that greatly contributes to the quality of life of our communities.

These dedicated media democracy activists have also succeeded in obtaining four to seven percent of the channel capacity on U.S. satellite delivery systems for educational and informational programming. And most recently, in the state of Vermont, they have succeeded in obtaining 10 percent of the broadband capacity for Public, Educational and Governmental use. This 10 percent reservation of broadband is something we hope to gain national legislative support for in the next few years. Additionally, we are working to gain low power (10 and 100 watt) FM radio licenses for neighborhood and community use.

This idea, that a certain portion of media should be in the hands of the citizenry, not just the corporations, is not limited to the United States, but exists in various countries in Europe and in Brazil, Fiji, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea

ADDRESS TO THE SIXTH OLYMPIAD OF THE MIND PARIS, FRANCE 11/2000

and Nepal.

Average citizens in these countries are trained to use video cameras, radio transmitters and the Internet to communicate social, civic and educational information free from the corporate control of commercial media. These average citizens then become active participants in media rather than just passive recipients of media.

A worldwide media democracy movement is becoming ever more critical as technologies expand the ability to communicate and media

corporations consolidate and become global. It is even more important as technological advances allow media corporations to control not only the delivery systems, but the content and speed of the information on those systems and the ability of the user to access information. The push for media democracy is essential as convergence technology allows voice, video and data to be delivered simultaneously, primarily through the most pernicious of media systems, the good old television set. This converged media, whether through cable or wireless promises to be fully user interactive. This brave new world of interactivity now centers around increasing consumer markets, turning all of us into non-stop, twenty-four hour a day, seven day a week shoppers.

Globalized media corporations speak today of a "walled garden" of voice, video and data, and they are working on their ability to keep you and me inside that walled garden so they can deliver their commercial messages to us. In this paradigm, we are consumers and they are the providers of "product." Not information but "product."

There is very little talk about the non-commercial uses of converged technology and its ability to empower citizens to partici-

Globalized media corporations speak today of a "walled garden" of voice, video and data, and they are working on their ability to keep you and me inside that walled garden so they can deliver their commercial messages to us. In this paradigm, we are consumers and they are the providers of "product." Not information but "product."

pate in governance more fully, access educational opportunities and life-long learning, gain critical health information, solve social problems of population, transportation, political disenfranchisement and poverty.

There is no doubt that the ability to access social, civic and educational information greatly contributes to the economic and social health of a society. There is great disparity between the communication abilities of the techno-industrialized states and the developing world. The Second Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Council has now taken up this issue, noting that half of the persons in the world have never made or received a phone call, that action is needed at the national, regional and international levels to create digital oppor-



Bunnie Riedel shown with participants at the Sixth Olympiad of the Mind. Other participants (not shown) included Bhoutros-Bhoutros Gali and F.W. DeKlerk.

tunities for all and that globalization without regulation will only benefit a small number of people.

Left to their own devices, telecom providers will do the least they have to do in order to gain the greatest benefit. They will pluck the "low-hanging fruit" of wealthy nations and ignore the needs of the poor nations. Recently I viewed the website of Global Crossing, the company that has laid fiber optic cable trans-Atlantically and trans-Pacific. On that website is a map which shows how the cable is laid and its various on-shore destinations. As you can predict, now that Global Crossing has crossed the Atlantic and Pacific, they are building hubs around major urban areas in Europe, East Asia, North and South America. Africa and most of the Eurasian land mass have been completely ignored.

I would argue that it is not the job of corporations and commercial interests to envision a world in which there is parity in access to communications, it is not the job of corporations and commercial interests to promote media democracy. If we are to have a world in which access to information is an international and fundamental human right, it is our job as interested citizens and community leaders to make it happen. We must create domestic and international policy to bring about communications equality for all people. We must ensure that technology is a means to an end not the end itself. We must envision technology as a vehicle rather than a destination.

In our own countries, we must create a regulatory environment that requires a portion of the capacity of any delivery system be reserved for public use. In the same way that we reserve public spaces and historical sites for enjoyment and enrichment of the entire society, not just the few who can afford to pay, we must have telecommunications policy that reserves television, radio and broadband capacity for use by all people, not just those who can afford to pay.

Internationally, we must foster regulatory policy that accomplishes at least two goals: 1) the building of communications delivery systems in developing nations; 2) the guarantee that information will flow uncensored across national borders and as it does, personal privacy will be protected.

As for the first goal, it is in our own self-interest that we view

communications as a basic human right in the same way we consider clean water, access to food and shelter, freedom from tyranny and access to economic opportunity, basic human rights. The right to receive and transmit information and to have access to communications systems must be supported by an international commitment to the building of these systems.

Negotiations can and should take place between the international community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multi-national corporations to encourage, if not require, corporate investment in the developing world. Multi-national corporations

are laying their cables in our oceans, orbiting satellites above our heads, using frequencies that cross our borders; they are creating a global communications village of unprecedented profit taking, the least they can do is ensure that the village is truly global by providing services to under-served populations.

Along with this, private sector investment must be met by public sector investment, either internationally or regionally. This week, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum is discussing investment in infrastructure as a way to bridge the digital divide between their wealthier and poorer member nations in order to open markets and increase trade. All of these conversations, whether internationally or regionally, cannot simply result in the creation of new markets or increased trade, they must also take place in a context of public interest and the reservation of capacity and funding for civic, social and educational uses. Otherwise we are not bridging the digital divide, we are only creating a new class of consumers for multi-national corporations.

As for the second issue of information flow across borders, I am deeply concerned by the increasing ability of telecommunications corporations to control the content and speed of information on the delivery systems. Propriety agreements are right now being developed between content providers and the owners of the platforms. The ability to control content explodes with the advent of convergence; that is voice, video and data through the same box, your television set or your computer. This technology destroys the entire premise of Internet openness. No longer will I be able to dial-up and go out into the world to any destination I might choose, instead I will be contained in that "walled garden" and only those content providers who have made proprietary agreements with the delivery providers (in the instances when they are not the same company) will be easily and readily accessible by me.

Added to this is the question of privacy. These same delivery systems are capable of cataloguing all manner of personal information about me and storing it on massive hard drives for resale, marketing or profiling purposes. In July, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the European Union agreed on a set of principles called "Safe Harbor," by which data would be transmitted to U.S. corporations from the European Union. The

principles are laudable in that they require user notification of data collection, the ability to "opt out" by the user and not allowing Safe Harbor participating companies to transfer data to an entity which does not abide by the Safe Harbor. But they do not go far enough in protecting privacy in that the Safe Harbor "was developed with the significant input of U.S. industry, permits companies to 'self-regulate,' and contemplates that companies will certify their own compliance with the Safe Harbor Principles." In other words, the very companies that were to be regulated will be the ones to testify that they are in compliance with no outside scrutiny. This is a classic example of the fox guarding the hen house.

We must guarantee the uncensored, uncontrolled flow of information across national borders. We also must make it illegal to collect, store or sell information on users without their express permission. We must reserve a portion of bandwidth for civic, social and educational uses, and most importantly, reserve a portion of bandwidth that cannot in any way be controlled or manipulated by these multi-national media corporations. We must provide domestic and international regulatory structures that encourage or require private and public sector investment in growing the telecommunications capacity of developing nations.

Each of us may have differing opinions as to what media democracy and communications parity may mean, but we do know that we are increasingly becoming a global communications village. Will that village merely be the venue for the marketing of soft drinks, hamburgers and blue jeans in an ever increasing effort to homogenize our distinctive cultures and our individual thought processes? Or will that village be a global town square where we meet and greet one another, share life sustaining information, explore our human commonalities and develop appreciation and respect for our cultural differences? If we ignore the implications of worldwide media consolidation, we will wake up to find ourselves in the first village. I personally prefer the dynamics of the second.

The members of the Alliance for Community Media have spent the last thirty years proving what can happen when there is a reservation of public space on a communications platform and there is a mechanism for funding the operations of that public space. Our members use media as a social services provider by delivering educational and governmental information and by fostering public discourse in an environment free from censorship. We have proven that great things can happen when communication tools are put into the hands of average people. We do not believe that media democracy should be limited to wealthier, techno-industrial states, but should be included as part of the discussion of bridging the digital divide for developing nations. Through public interest reservation, international telecommunications regulation, investment by the public and private sector in developing nations, we hope to move closer to a day when all people can share in the richness of media democracy.

Bunnie Riedel is executive director of the Alliance for Community Media. Contact her at briedel@alliancecm.org

HAVE INC. AUDIO/VIDEO TECHNOLOGIES

BLANK MEDIA

SONY • FUJI • MAXELL • BASF • HHB

CABLE & SUPPLIES

CANARE • BELDEN • MOGAMI

VIDEO & AUDIO DUPLICATION

- VHS, 3/4", BETA SP DUPLICATION
- AUDIO/CASSETTE DUPLICATION
- CD/CD-ROM REPLICATION
- INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS CONVERSION
- 800# FULFILLMENT
- CUSTOM DESIGN & PACKAGING
- MACROVISION ANTICOPY PROTECTION

Special Discounts for Alliance Members!

Just Mention This Ad.

1-888-776-3712 toll free

fax: 1-518-828-2008

e-mail: have@haveinc.com

web: www.haveinc.com

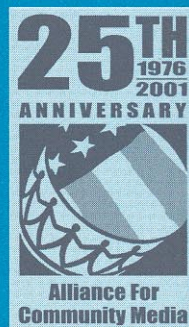
**309 Power Avenue
Hudson • NY • 12534-2448**

CALL TODAY FOR A FREE CATALOG AND BROCHURE!

Since 1977, doing business by the "Golden Rule"

An open letter from the 'anointed' guest editor of the 25th Anniversary Issue of CMR.

**I need help...the task is
daunting...the opportunity
is exciting...the end product
is our history.**



Someone said—was it Plato, or Socrates perhaps—the way one establishes a place in history is through the documentation of one's accomplishments. Well, this is our opportunity not only to document our achievements, but to show the breadth of our impact, the importance of our efforts, and the success of our commitment over the past 25 years. The issue will be published for the national conference.



Please join us with ideas, your articles, your archives.

If you have something to share, contact

Rika Welsh at rikaqui@aol.com

Don't be fooled by those fake "town meetings" held by politicians in complicity with either ignorant or bamboozled TV partners. They are the classic political forum dressed up in people power terms. The "town meeting" in America means that the citizens get together to discuss important matters—and then vote to make the law themselves. A town meeting is direct democracy with citizen empowerment at its core. Political forums or political talk shows are just talk, and politicians, experts, or pundits are center stage. Putting them on TV does nothing to improve the situation even if the viewing audience is "encouraged" to participate by phoning in their opinions (which are usually screened). And don't expect the corporate media—whether it be national networks or local affiliates—to do anything to change the situation.

The best uses of interactive TV to actually empower citizens have come either via cable television through its government, educational or public access channels. Let me cite just one of a number of possible examples.

I was on the board of Human Service TV (HSTV) in the mid-late 1980s. We decided on programming for the public access channel of Oceanic Cablevision in Honolulu, Hawaii. One project we devised, in cooperation with the Honolulu City and County Council was to broadcast—as usual—a public hearing. Of course, as you might guess, broadcasting a public hearing is not too likely to get high ratings on a public access channel. However, if you do what we did—you can not only increase your viewing audience 100 or 1,000 times—you can also empower citizens at home to make a real difference not only at that hearing, but in the vote of the council.

What we did was to hook up two sets of telephone lines into the council hearing. One set would be used to provide viewers with an equal opportunity to testify at the hearing with the people who showed up in person. They would watch the hearing and if they wanted to testify, they called the telephone numbers flashed in a crawl across the bottom of the screen. The other set of lines would not open until after several hours of testimony. Then, after hearing the debate, voters could vote on whether or not they favored or disfavored the issue under consideration. In our view, this would make public hearings more interesting, more accessible and more accountable to the citizenry. Boy, we were right on target!

What happened was that we were overwhelmed by the response. The lines were clogged for hours and hours. We did manage to get about 35 people to testify over the phone, and they were terrific. Many had to wait for a long time on the electronic queue and had written down their (limited to one minute) testimony. It became clear quickly that the people around the

THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF AUTHENTIC TV TOWN MEETINGS

by Ted Becker

"...cable TV and its public access and governmental channels is readily available to do good, democratic programming—with or without the cooperation and collaboration of city, county, state or federal officials. The public hankers for it and with the advent of the Internet, there are endless possibilities of what can only be called truly empowering TV town meetings.

city and county were of one mind, and the council and those who had come to testify in person of another. In the end, many thousands voted against the proposal that was favored by the politicians and the lobbyists. The results were published in the next day's newspaper and a few weeks later the council voted the proposal down. But they never did that again.

So what does this mean? It means that public access channels and community TV have a gold mine at their disposal—if they use it correctly. The major television networks and their local affiliates are not in the business of empowering citizens. They are there to entertain them and make money off their numbers via advertising. But cable TV and its public access and governmental channels is readily available to do good, democratic programming—with or without the cooperation and collaboration of city, county, state or federal officials. The public hankers for it and with the advent of the Internet, there are endless possibilities of what can only be called truly empowering TV town meetings.

Are there enough people in the community TV network to come together and develop these kinds of

programs? If so, we can make a very big difference right now in America in getting the people's voice to be an informed, coherent and powerful one.

Ted Becker is a professor of political science at Auburn University. The author of twelve books, he is also a political activist trying to link teledemocracy, direct democracy, and environmental sustainability. Contact him at becketl@auburn.edu

Becker's latest work, with Christa Daryl Slaton, is The Future of Teledemocracy. (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2000). In it the authors cite the growing dissatisfaction and lack of confidence in representative democracy throughout the world. They claim that "At the dawn of the new millennium we have instant communication, rapid transportation, and extensive education, coupled with a tottering, doddering, unresponsive representative democracy." (p.1) Becker and Slaton call for the application of new information and communication technologies to create a "more direct and participatory form of democracy." The Future of Teledemocracy describes numerous examples of practical experiments with a variety of new direct democratic systems and also contains additional information about the public hearing described above.

Additional information is available on the Teledemocracy Action News + Network website, or www.auburn.edu/tann.

THE *TILT* OF THE TUBE

THE STRUCTURAL CONSERVATIVE BIAS OF TELEVISION

by Jeffrey Scheuer

Simple vs. Complex Ideas—and Why the Difference Matters. Do technologies have ideologies? Are machines morally and politically neutral extensions of human scientific genius? Or are their effects at times latent, obscure, unpredictable, but profound in their impact on social and power relations? These questions have important political implications for progressive scholars and activists.

Viewed from one angle, technologies—machines and mechanical systems—are patently morally and politically innocent. As inanimate objects lacking consciousness, they cannot project or pursue human values. They are not existential agents. Communication technologies, on this view, deliver messages, but messages are not embedded in their very structure.

From another angle, however, machines are deeply implicated in society and social structures. Cars, for example, allow their users more individual freedom than mass transit systems. But they are also inherently less egalitarian. Not everyone can afford a car, and when communities (such as suburbs) are designed for automobiles, they reward car owners and punish others. Car-based cultures also keep us separated from one another, closed off (with families or immediate friends) in our own metallic domains. They encourage us to compete for space rather than to share it, they reflect our differences of status and taste, and so on.

The difference between seeing cars (or any other technologies) as neutral devices and seeing them as ideologically-charged is not a difference between a true perspective and a false one, but rather between a simpler and a more complex one.

Both perspectives (and a spectrum of possible intermediate views) are valid on their face, and in their own terms. The simpler view has the advantage of its own obviousness and accessibility. The more complex perspective, while appealing to a narrower audience—an audience with a higher tolerance of social complexity—explains more broadly and more deeply.

Here's the kicker: the complex view of technology (and, indeed, of government and society in general) is the natural view of the left. The simpler view is that of the right. Both views have their merits, up to a point. Which we choose cannot be decided by some supreme principle, but reflects our subjective appetite for complexity.

And here's the follow-on kicker: one particular, dominant technology of our times—television—naturally favors the conveyance of ideas and perspectives that are simpler. Television, by its very design and structure, is inherently more hospitable to the messages and values of the right.

Television as a Tool of the Left? A simple, unbridled faith in technology is a pillar of American conservatism, and sister to the unbridled conservative faith in the market. These twin faiths are linked to the broader conservative habit of seeing the world through simpler lenses. The conservative faith in technology and markets is thus linked as well with an aversion to the deeper and more systematic modes of understanding that are the implicit goal of progressives and the left.

This applies to television as much as to anything else. If we regard TV as merely “a toaster with pictures” (the unintentionally ridiculous phrase of Mark Fowler, a Federal Communications Commission member under President Ronald Reagan), then there is not much more to say about its social and political effects. End of discussion—burn the toast.

But let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that television, unlike toasters, actually pervades American life and consciousness; that something we typically watch for several hours a day actually influences our lives and our ideas; and that it cannot possibly be without some profound political effects.

Conservatives also claim that the media are progressive. (TV is a liberal toaster.) They've been saying this for years.

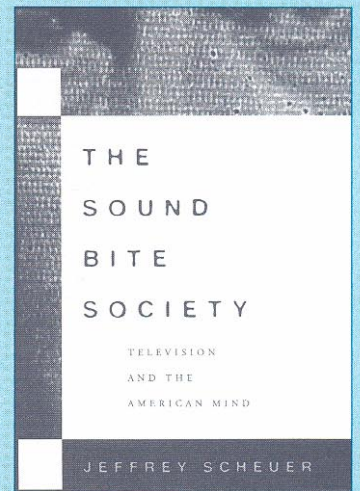
Television and the printed press, they say, are dominated by progressives who shape how we see the news.

Now this is an interesting claim, and not entirely without merit. And it bears noting that most, if not all, media criticism from the right consists of variations of that claim. No doubt many members of the journalistic community, and many other producers of media and popular culture, are progressives of one form or another. But—with particular reference to television—I'd like to mention a few minor objections to the “liberal media” argument. In fact, a lot of minor objections, leading up to one major one.

Let's start with the little ones. First, the majority of journalists in the so-called progressive media, in recent surveys, are to the right of the rest of America on economic issues. On social issues they remain somewhat to the left. Second, professional imperatives and other pressures on most journalists override personal political leanings. It just doesn't matter that much how a mainstream reporter or producer or editor votes. It seldom shows in his or her work. (I'm not counting journals of opinion or highly-opinionated TV talk shows).

Third, the mainstream media are owned and operated by an oligopoly of giant corporations—like AOL Time Warner, General Electric, and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.—which are not interested in journalistic glory or investigative reporting. Their only agenda is the bottom line. And commercial profit in the media means entertainment, not muckraking or rocking the boat.

Fourth, the boundaries between editorial and advertising and marketing (and entertainment generally) are eroding virtually



Jeffrey Scheuer is the author of *The Sound Bite Society: Television and the American Mind* (New York and London: Four Walls Eight Windows Press) www.thesoundbitesociety.com

across the board in American journalism. That's not a sign of progressive bias. Fifth, recent Democratic candidates in America—Carter, Mondale, Dukakis, Clinton, to say nothing of candidates lower down the ballot—have not exactly had a free ride in the media. Sixth, the most brilliant manipulators of the U.S. media, perhaps ever, were the handlers of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. (Mark Hertsgaard, in his book *On Bended Knee*, explains where the progressive media were during the Reagan presidency: nowhere to be seen.)

And is it the progressive media that make it so hard to get elected to anything in America if you've ever smoked pot, worn a beard, loved a member of your own sex, professed atheism, or called yourself a "liberal"?

Television certainly can't be called progressive based on the accuracy of its characterizations of minorities, working people, the poor, gays, spiritualists, or deviant lifestyles. Nor is it the left that insists debate on political talk shows be mainly between the center and the right. Even public television has become a bastion of conservative politics and business-oriented shows, funded by ultra-conservative private foundations like Scaife, Olin, Bradley, JM, and so forth. Maybe that's why such arch-conservatives as William F. Buckley, Patrick Buchanan, Robert Novak, John McLoughlin, Cal Thomas, Rush Limbaugh, and their ilk set the political tone of the electronic media. Not to mention the latest ranting, homophobic entry into this crowd, Dr. Laura Schlessinger.

Furthermore, it isn't the progressive media that have made TV a powerful vehicle for the religious Right—vaulting Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and other Christian broadcasters from obscurity to a central position in American political life. And the tabloid TV shows are not exactly celebrations of equality, tolerance, and social harmony.

Finally, it wasn't the progressive media that brought us Ronald Reagan, Oliver North, and the most conservative Congress in American history—led by the likes of Newt Gingrich, Trent Lott, Dick Armey, John Kasich, and Tom DeLay.

Accusing the media of being progressive has been a brilliantly successful ploy of the right. The conservative commentator William Kristol put it best: "I admit it, the liberal media were never that powerful, and the whole thing was often used as an excuse by conservatives for conservative failures."

Television: The Hidden Handmaiden of Conservatism. But quite apart from the media environment and the content of TV shows, there is a more basic way in which television lends itself to conservative values and messages. This argument against the media's putative liberalism takes roughly the form of a syllogism:

1. Electronic media radically simplify the world — or at least, they relentlessly and pervasively encourage us to see it in a simpler way.

2. Simpler views of politics and society are quintessentially conservative, and more complex views are quintessentially progressive and radical.

3. It follows that the simplifying filters of television and radio promote the tidy sound bites of the right and militate against the more complicated ideas of the left.

How does television simplify? It offers us a deceptively narrow lens on social reality, one that focuses on highly specific points in

time and space: confined scenes, brief actions, individuals, small groups. Television is all about immediacy, action and singularity. It's great for depicting spectacles: news conferences, sporting events, ceremonies, wild animals in the bush. It compartmentalizes and disintegrates experience, rather than connecting or integrating. By personalizing and dramatizing social life, and by presenting experience in artificially concrete terms, TV is perfectly suited to visceral, uncomplicated messages.

Conversely, television ignores or resists complexity in all its forms: context, remote causes and effects, ambiguity, and perhaps most of all, disparities between appearance and reality. The tube therefore de-emphasizes larger ideas that it cannot depict onscreen: social movements, causes (including social causes), economic conditions, historical forces, distant ramifications, collective enterprises, evolutionary progressions, underlying patterns. And these latter, I would suggest, are precisely the intellectual foundations of egalitarianism and the left.

Conservatism at its best (and worst) is centered on simpler values: the independent self and nation, and a political minimalism based on smaller government, lower taxes, fewer regulations, a more limited agenda, fewer rights and duties. Like television itself, conservatism is skeptical of the hidden, the systemic, the paradoxical, the contradictory, the remote.

The values and messages of the American right—small government, laissez-faire, "rugged individualism," its views on defense, crime, faith, family, guns—revolve around simple orthodoxies: market fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, moral and

...television ignores or resists complexity in all its forms: context, remote causes and effects, ambiguity, and perhaps most of all, disparities between appearance and reality. The tube therefore de-emphasizes larger ideas that it cannot depict onscreen: social movements, causes (including social causes), economic conditions, historical forces, distant ramifications, collective enterprises, evolutionary progressions, underlying patterns. And these latter, I would suggest, are precisely the intellectual foundations of egalitarianism and the left.

constitutional fundamentalism.

Liberalism, on the other hand, is based on more complex notions of interdependent communities and a more structured society, with a more intricate social contract. It asks more of us and offers more in return: more equality, more government, more change—not the sorts of things you'd immediately think of as telegenic.

Hence my central, contrarian claim: television is an ideal medium not just for polemical sound bites and attack ads, but for the more limited ideas and agenda of the right. The electronic media may be progressive in some ways, but overall their effects are conservative.

Of course there are exceptions and complications to this argument. TV is not a right-wing conspiracy. And dignified simplicity certainly has its place as the arch principle of a tolerant, libertarian brand of conservatism—a brand that still plays a significant role in American life, but one that isn't highly visible in the media.

Likewise, complexity—especially academic complexity—has its

limits and tactical liabilities. And of course the left can sometimes be polemical and simplistic too. But even then, it is invariably on behalf of more complex underlying values. (Where are the snappy sound bites for day care, health care, full employment, legal aid, college loans, worker safety? Where's the bumper-sticker slogan for single-payer health insurance or equalizing public school funding across districts?)

Post-industrial societies are rapidly becoming more complex—a reason, perhaps, why people seek political refuge in simple, divisive slogans and sound bites. What can the left do about it? Television will be with us, in one form or another, for a long time to come. Even as it converges and merges with the Internet, TV will not fundamentally change—at least not in foreseeable ways that will dramatically alter its political valences.

What the left must do is focus on understanding the media and the specific challenges they pose to progressive values and messages. This involves devising progressive sound bites, but also recognizing the limits of sound bites as vehicles of progressive ideas. It also involves teaching kids to be media literate—teaching them how to decode, analyze, and distinguish various kinds of messages and images. Other countries (including the U.K., Canada and Australia) are much further along in this area. Media literacy is critical thinking about media, and we need it in America.

However, as you might suspect, critical thinking and media literacy are complex enterprises. They encourage us to look beyond arguments and appearances, and thus are inherently subversive, anti-commercial, and egalitarian. It will be hard to bring conservatives on board that bandwagon.

But the first step for progressive advocates and thinkers is recognizing the problem. The left has nothing to fear but television itself.

Reprinted with permission. This article originally appeared as an October 2000 Loka Alert, in the series published online by the Loka Institute of Amherst, MA. (www.loka.org).

Jeffrey Scheuer <JScheuer1@aol.com> is a member of the Board of Directors of the Loka Institute and author of the new book *The Sound Bite Society*, from which this Loka Alert has been loosely adapted. [www.thesoundbitesociety.com]

Critical appraisal of Jeffrey Scheuer's The Sound Bite Society: Television and the American Mind (New York and London: Four Walls Eight Windows Press)

"One of the most incisive critiques of television and its cultural impact I've read in years. Mr. Scheuer makes his case with a precision and clarity that will resound with anyone who's ever wondered . . . how we managed to let our national political discourse become an incomprehensible blur of sound bites."

—Electronic Media

"Breaks new intellectual ground . . . lively and invigorating . . . a delicious writing style . . . deeply incisive."

—The Chicago Tribune

"[A] brilliant analysis of TV grammar and how it prohibits complex discourse."

—Choice, February 2000

"An insightful but profoundly unsettling volume."

—Langdon Winner in Dissent, Spring 2000.

Cable TV LawManager is a trademark of Etrok. Copyright © 1998 Etrok. All rights reserved. No programmers were harmed in the making of Cable TV LawManager.



Cable TV LawManager™

Cable TV LawManager- the leading computer rules service for cable-is the only rules service to put on your computer screen the full, up-to-date, text of FCC rules plus key FCC reports, orders, cable letters, court decisions and more. Over 25,000 fully-searchable pages!

It's also the easiest to use-like a web browser on steroids.

For all PCs running Microsoft® Windows™. Priority subscription-10 updates a year-just \$295. Now available on disks or convenient CDs.

Try it on your computer risk-free with our unconditional 30-day money-back guarantee.

Available exclusively from... **etrok**

PO Box 30550
Jackson Hole, WY 83001

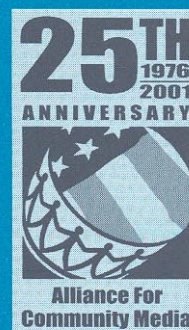
1.800.883.8765
1.307.734.2734 (fax)

lawmanager@etrok.com
http://www.etrok.com

Salute the Alliance and Congratulate Your Access Center in the 25th Anniversary issue of CMR. Coming to the 2001 Conference.

Your access organization can be a part of this keepsake time capsule by placing an ad in the folds of access history:

Celebrate your founding, your center's growth and achievements, and honor those who made it all happen in your community.



Nonprofit Alliance member organizations can choose from a full, half or quarter page ad in this commemorative issue, and receive **10% off the regular price.**

Full Page \$450 • Half Page \$333 • Quarter Page \$243

with Alliance nonprofit 25th Anniversary edition discount.



Contact the Alliance for details, deadlines and sizes.

202.393.2650 voice, 202.393.2653 fax,
or email at government@allianceccm.org

INTERACTIVE P.E.G

A TECHNICAL STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

by Andrew Afflerbach Ph.D.

Introduction. For the access community, the advent of interactive television (ITV) raises the question of how to utilize ITV to enhance PEG programming. The challenge for PEG programmers is to prepare for the imminent arrival of ITV by assessing the technical opportunities for PEG implementation of ITV. This article gives a brief description of the technical workings of ITV and how PEG operators may be able to prepare for transition to an ITV environment by creating PEG programming now that can be easily adapted for ITV in the future. Specifically, the article recommends that PEG programmers prepare for the advent of ITV by developing rich Web content. A station can create a "proto-ITV" system that is ready for transition to ITV once sufficient expertise is gained to incorporate ITV functionality and once capacity is negotiated from the cable operator.

Background. ITV is becoming available in trial markets throughout the world, demonstrating the convergence of television and computer network technology. ITV is primarily available on cable television systems, although it is being contemplated for satellite, DSL, and broadcast markets as well. As presented by the media companies, advertisers, networks, and cable operators, ITV provides an enhanced television viewing experience in which viewers of a program can point and click for more detail about a program, participate in a game show, download a recipe during a cooking show, split screens between multiple camera angles at a sporting event, obtain sports statistics, or participate from home in a program using text, voice, and, potentially, two-way video. ITV can allow advertisers to specifically target viewers based on their viewing and purchasing choices, can integrate email and chat with the television experience, and can enable viewers to interact with friends and family members through email, chat, or even transmission of still pictures—all while in front of the television set.

ITV promises to bring Web surfers and Internet users to the television by taking all of the functions that are now specific to a computer and repackaging them in a more user-friendly television format. By placing ITV in the subscriber's living room, the Internet may be enjoyed from a comfortable chair and, potentially, with the involvement of friends and family, as opposed to the more individual experience of the PC user.

ITV also continues a current trend of the television industry of moving from mass-appeal broadcast programs watched by tens of millions of people to specialty and niche programming offered over smaller cable networks. This shift provides a more customized viewing experience,

wherein the viewers select exactly the programming they want, presented exactly the way they want it, and advertisers target their efforts toward smaller groups of target viewers that have indicated purchasing and viewing preferences.

ITV and PEG complement each other because both focus on a specialized, interactive viewing community of specific interests in a specific geographic area. PEG is intrinsically oriented more toward viewer participation than standard broadcast television, in that 1) public access allows viewers to be an active participant in creating programming, 2) government programming is designed to increase citizen information and participation, and 3) educational programming, if effective, involves participation by the student in an interactive learning experience.

Technical Overview. ITV functionality can be provided for analog or digital television channels using a standards-compliant analog or digital set top converter or game unit (FIGURE 1). The set-top converter can have any number of peripheral devices, as long as the software platform supports the use of the peripherals with the interactive content.

The television broadcast signal with ITV enhancement contains hyperlinks to text on the screen, overlaid information on

Figure 1 -- Delivery of ITV to the Home

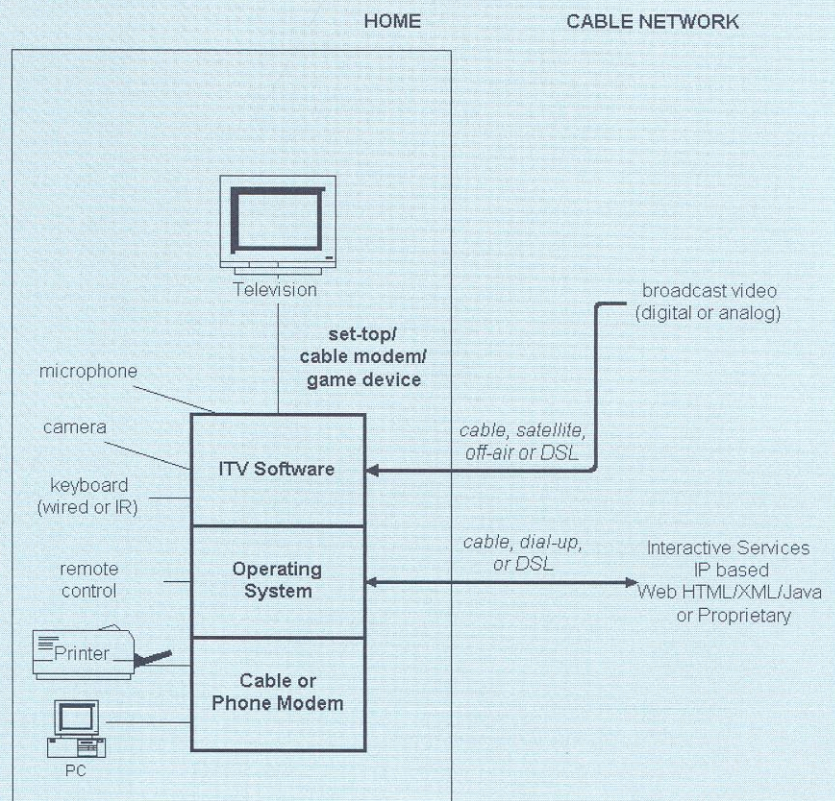
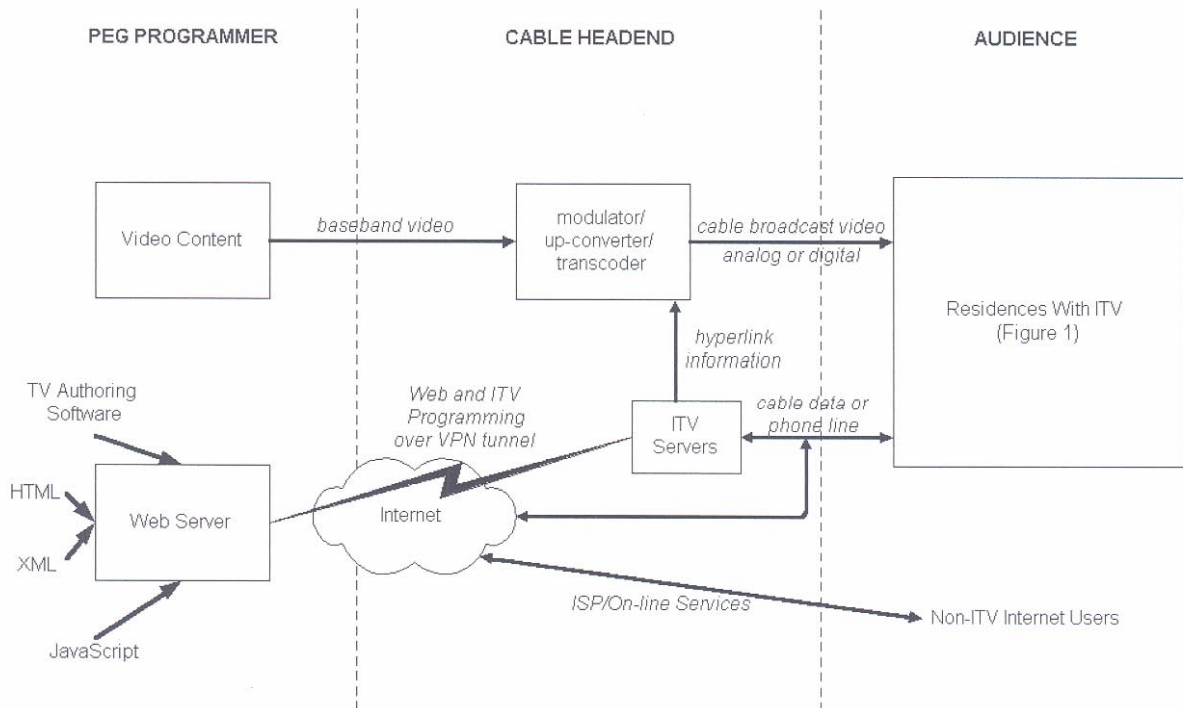


Figure 2 -- ITV at Cable Headend Potential Model



the top or bottom, and additional graphics or special effects. In an analog system, the ITV enhancement can be transmitted in a sub-carrier. In a digital video stream, the ITV enhancement is transmitted as part of the MPEG stream.

At the same time, Web-based information is provided over a data channel; either over a cable modem or other data platform on the cable system or through a separate Internet connection, such as over a dial-up phone or DSL line. The audience interactivity is carried over the separate data channel to the servers at the headend facility or to the programmer's Web server, through the Internet or a dedicated data connection (FIGURE 2).

There are a number of companies developing platforms for ITV, using either proprietary or Web-based programming languages and server platforms, with varying degrees of processing power distributed between the company providing the programming, the cable headend, and the set top converter.* The packages also vary in the information available—some packages provide only a set of features linked to participating advertisers; some are linked to advertisers and participating cable channels such as CNN, A&E, and the Weather Channel; and others include links to television programming and to the World Wide Web in its entirety, with client processing software designed to optimize standard Web content for viewing on a television monitor.

Some ITV platforms preclude PEG participation by using proprietary standards for authoring and production and thereby permitting only business partners in the ITV venture to create programming. A proprietary approach to ITV shuts out potential sources of content other than major broadcast and cable networks, and only a few token educational and small-scale video production companies have the opportunity to participate. Indeed, most ITV platforms are currently geared toward partnerships with larger production studios and media companies,

rather than small producers of local content.

The Interactive Council Meeting: One Example of Interactive PEG. The good news for PEG programmers is that open-standards ITV platforms are available that use industry standard software, and that are compatible with equipment already present in the cable television headend and in the subscriber homes.

In one possible scenario of interactive PEG, elected officials sit in a studio or council chamber, and their meeting is presented on video, as is done in a non-interactive TV setting. The government access programmer programs a chat session for text, audio, and video using standard Web programming tools enhanced with specialized ITV authoring software. The programmer's Web server streams interactive information to the ITV servers at the cable headend in a form compliant with the architecture of the cable operator's ITV hardware and software. This streaming is over the Internet or a dedicated data link.

The subscriber viewing the access channel uses a remote control or keyboard to join the chat session. The viewer interacts with the people in the studio or council chamber by text, voice, or Web-quality video link, depending on the types of peripherals on the viewer's set-top converter and the technical capabilities of the cable operator's ITV system.

The access programmer could also configure the same interactive programming to be presented simultaneously on the programmer's website, where PC users without cable service or cable ITV service could have the same level of interactivity, provided that they have client software on their computers that is compatible with the software on the Web server (such as Microsoft Net Meeting), and that the PC user has a microphone or camera.

Recommended Strategy for Preparing for Interactive PEG. A PEG programmer interested in providing ITV program-

ming through the cable system should ask the cable operator which platforms are currently being used or are planned for use on the cable system. Systems limited to advertising and national content will be less useful because the content is not originated locally. It will be easier to use those open platforms that already provide subscribers with content from the local cable operator and from the Internet.

Over the coming years, cable operators are likely to migrate to an open standards-compliant ITV platform, in much the same way that formerly closed on-line services, such as AOL and Prodigy, opened to the wider Internet. In that scenario, restrictions caused by a proprietary platform may decrease.

PEG operators should then independently research the platform used by their cable operator to determine what is necessary to provide programming if the system is a Web standards based ITV system. ITV providers such as Liberate (www.liberate.com), Microsoft (www.microsoft.com/TV), and OpenTV (www.opentv.com) provide information about the process of programming on their platforms, system requirements for authoring and server platforms, and system capabilities.

Armed with knowledge of technical requirements for PEG ITV, PEG programmers and franchise authorities should negotiate with the cable operator for the implementation of ITV for PEG channels. On an open standards system, the programmers would need the cable operator to 1) transcode the PEG video signal to incorporate the interactive hyperlinks, 2) provide the required storage space and capacity on the cable operator's ITV servers, 3) agree on a means of transporting information between the PEG programmer's Web server and the ITV Web servers, and 4) agree on a procedure for implementation and troubleshooting. Many franchise agreements have clauses requiring the upgrade of PEG with new technologies over the lifetime of the franchise agreement or have a re-opener provision for technology upgrades. The franchising authority may opt to return unused PEG channels or make other trades in return for ITV capacity. The franchising authority and the PEG programmers may also want to call attention to existing interactive PEG programming and use those as models in implementation of interactive PEG.

PEG programmers should also be cognizant that the Internet can provide much of the functionality of ITV. Non-ITV interactivity has several enormous advantages: First, it can be accomplished independently of the cable operator. Second, it can be implemented immediately upon obtaining the necessary expertise, equipment, and Internet hosting capacity. Finally, most of the work that goes into creating Web interactivity would not be wasted once the ITV function is added; in fact, the same programming would be necessary for ITV implementation.

PEG programmers should therefore focus training efforts on Web programming, Web video production, and video streaming. In order to effectively integrate ITV with PEG, programmers need to develop the new set of skills and equipment required to "author" an ITV program, over and above the experience necessary to produce standard video programming. This set of skills entails knowledge of Web programming and HTML and XML for interactive PEG. Programmers should also consider looking to establish partnerships with ISPs and other broadband providers. PEG can offer the ISP community technical expertise in video

and in creation of content, while the ISP community can offer programming expertise and bandwidth to the Internet.

Finally, while creating a studio infrastructure for migration to digital broadcast video and high-definition television is likely to be an important goal in the coming years, PEG programmers should also pay attention to the fact that interactive video is now becoming available in analog and digital broadcast formats

Gaining expertise in interactive television and Web video should be at least as high a priority as conversion to digital presentation, especially considering that the timetable for implementation of digital formats is unclear. ITV and Web video are being realized as quickly as digital broadcast video.

and over the Internet. Gaining expertise in interactive television and Web video should be at least as high a priority as conversion to digital presentation, especially considering that the timetable for implementation of digital formats is unclear. ITV and Web video are being realized as quickly as digital broadcast video. PEG programmers who are considering setting aside substantial funding for HDTV and SDTV conversion may wish to reassess their plans and develop technology and expertise in ITV and Web video.

*Arthur Cole, "Interactive TV Platforms: Now the Quarterback Can Really Hear You," *Communications Technology*, Vol. 17, No. 7, July 2000, p. 54.

Andrew Afflerbach Ph.D. is Vice-President and Principal Engineer of Columbia Telecommunications Corporation. He specializes in system-level planning, design, and implementation of wide-area and local-area telecommunications networks for video, voice, and data applications. Among his areas of expertise is emerging technologies and state-of-the-art technological applications.

Dr. Afflerbach has planned and supervised implementation of a wide variety of data, video, and voice networks. He has designed and analyzed municipal government communication networks, and has prepared reports prescribing usage of private fiber optic and cable television systems in local government communications networks. He has advised municipalities on the development of municipality owned subscriber cable systems. He has also worked with a number of cities, counties, and municipal utility companies to develop long-term, integrated telecommunications plans.

Dr. Afflerbach has taught multi-day courses on telecommunications technology for the George Washington University Continuing Education Program; the University of Maryland Instructional Television Program; Intelligent Transportation Services (ITS) America, and the COMNET Exposition.

Columbia Telecommunications Corporation is an engineering consulting firm specializing in providing telecommunications engineering support to state and local governments as well as public, non-profit, and educational institutions. CTC has provided a wide range of technical planning, engineering design, and implementation support to clients throughout the United States for eighteen years.

CREATING PUBLIC SPACE IN THE PUBLIC'S INTEREST

By Autumn Labbe-Renault

Picture if you will a brightly-lit building with cheerful music playing. Upon entering, you pass an exhibit of colorful sculptures made from recycled plastics by students at Holmes Junior High School.

At one end is a large studio with teleconferencing capability. Currently in the studio are representatives from the Sister Cities Commission, Human Rights Commission, and the non-profit International House. They're teleconferencing with colleagues in our sister city of Inuyama, Japan. Later that day, a local museum society will host a "virtual theater" performance from Chicago. In the evening, a video producer has the studio booked for his weekly musicians' showcase.

Down the hall local teens are participating in school-to-career training at the convergent media "RADLab." Some are learning Web page design and Linux programming; some are being introduced to the center's CD mastering facility. Still others are uploading digital videos they've created on site to be streamed on the Internet. Three young women are staffing the community's popular LPFM station.

Around the corner near the main entrance, a woman is buying tickets to a concert at the Community Box Office. Afterwards, she's meeting a friend for coffee at the Center Cafe that overlooks the Gallery featuring new "Watershed Art" works curated by the Davis Art Center. She's thinking about coming back that evening for a premier screening and discussion of a local independent film that will also be streamed on the DCN website. She'd also like to attend the Tree City meeting downstairs, but she knows that if she misses it she can watch it later on the community meeting channel. It's great, she thinks, that local groups have a centralized home where their meetings and activities are recorded and transmitted to the community.

This piece of fiction could become reality in Davis, California. Recently, several staff and board members from Davis Community Television (DCTV) and Davis Community Network (DCN) met in a downtown coffee shop to begin mulling over the concept of a convergent tele-media and arts center in downtown Davis. At that meeting, what began as a late-night brainstorm by one of our colleagues evolved into a rather ambitious concept we're tentatively calling the Davis Community Media, Arts & Culture Center.

Davis (population 56,000) is a growing university town, an island community set between sprawling Sacramento suburbs and fertile agricultural fields and wetland. The majority of citizens (80 percent) have access to computers and computer literacy is high. The digital divide is not deep here, but there is still a great deal of unrealized potential for using technology to facilitate and build a vital, healthy community.

Two events precipitated the first DCMAC planning meeting. First, the City of Davis is about to revise its overarching Telecommunications Ordinance in preparation for upcoming cable franchise renewal and the possibility of an over-builder entering into the picture. The first draft of the new ordinance is due in the spring, with franchise renewal due to take place by 2003.

Second, the city recently issued a call for proposals for best re-use of the downtown building about to be vacated by our police department. Designated an historic landmark, the original city hall building has a prime downtown address and about 11,000 square feet of usable space. The city is looking for concepts that contribute to downtown revitalization by offering unique services that also general both day and evening foot traffic.

Enter the DCMAC concept. The principal players, DCTV and DCN, are long-time strategic partners, both well versed in using technology to enhance and foster a sense of community. Other collaborators currently include the local Arts Center, a music teachers' guild, and sister city groups. Our challenge as we consider the DCMAC is this: how do we move beyond traditional uses of community media to create something that is forward-looking, economically viable and of real community building capacity and value?

As of this writing, DCTV and DCN are crafting a preliminary proposal that would combine a remote community television studio with teleconferencing capability, a convergent media lab, cafe, gallery, performance and screening space, and wired meeting spaces. Emphasized throughout would be two-way communications capability, realized by connecting this facility to a new fiber I-Net that would also connect DCTV/DCN's existing buildings, City Hall, the Varsity Theater, the Teen and Senior Centers, and many other nodes. Davis currently lacks any broadband public teleconferencing facility, and local organizations are hard-pressed to find crew to tape their meetings.

Other proposed public service components include the centralized community box office, rehearsal and/or performing space for local talent, and small offices for other community non-profit organizations.

The hardest questions are, of course, funding and sustainability. There are a number of potential answers to these, including possible franchise negotiated revenues, partnerships with the city and corporate supporters' start-up grants from public agencies and private foundations, and income generating uses.

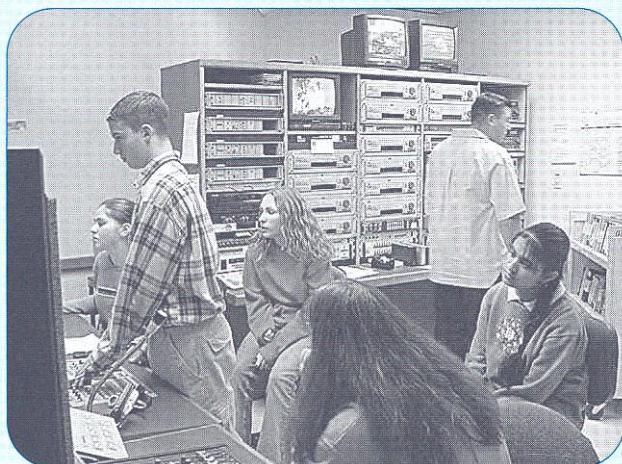
It is too early to say whether the DCMAC will come to fruition. Other proposed uses for the downtown site include several historical collection museum concepts, a retail mini-mall, a brewpub, and a social services hub. I believe that the DCMAC idea, in some incarnation, will live to inspire a renewed commitment on the part of our organization to building community and enhancing the quality of live in Davis.

Wish us well. We'll keep you posted.

Autumn Labbe-Renault is assistant director of Davis Community Television and writes frequently on telecom issues. Contact her at autumn@ctv.davis.ca.us. Richard Lowenberg, executive director of the Davis Community Network contributed to this article.



SHARING
VISIONS
THOUGHTS FROM
THE FIELD



SHARING OUR VISION ON DIGITAL CONVERGENCE

@MALDEN HIGH SCHOOL, MALDEN MA

Malden Access TV and AT&T Broadband teamed up to sponsor an essay contest for multimedia students of teachers Karen Razzino and Beth Butter at Malden High School. The challenge was to envision the future of digital convergence. The winning student, Clair Leabman, received a new broadband-ready PC and free high-speed Internet access donated by local cable provider, AT&T Broadband. MATV is sending her to the Alliance Northeast Region Spring conference at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY.

WILL TVs BECOME PCs OR WILL PCs BECOME TVs?

by Clair Leabman

Multimedia, Period 4

The latest system known as "broadband" introduces to the average consumer an interactive TV that has a limitless number of possibilities. The idea of "TV meets the Web" is a revolutionary idea and a large variety of new TV programs, products, and Internet information can take advantage of it. Being an average teen, I have been raised to be part of this "hi tech revolution." I have a number of ideas about possibilities for broadband technology to use. With the use of broadband, there can be shows such as international MTV, international news, movie channels, as well as international learning channels, making it possible for information to be obtained from one part of the world to the other. These new possibilities make it possible for a student to find information on China directly from China, rather than searching through inadequate research on the Internet or in the local library.

Rather than just getting the basic facts on that country, a student can now find out the latest trends and news by just turning on the TV. In addition, the advantages of having the Internet and TV combined make it easier for a person to go back and forth. If a person does not like what they are watching, they can switch back and surf the net. Since the connection is so much faster than a regular telephone line, shopping on-line will become easier and more popular.

Having online chats through a digital camera also has room to be improved. Rather than just talking to someone from another state, a person can talk to someone from another country without the phone bill.

Playing games on the Internet is now a very popular thing to do. These are interactive games online in which you play with people from other places. Broadband allows you to play with someone from perhaps, the other side of the world. There can now be international games and game shows played right out of your home.

Along with that, it will be easier for people to be home schooled with broadband, or in school, even when they are at home. If a student is absent, she can be home, turn on the TV, and still attend the classes. If a handout is given, the teacher can scan it and send it to the student, and the student can print it off of their TV, just like their computer. Instead of say, visiting the colleges in person, or visiting other countries, a broadband user may turn on the TV and select a country to see the sights or preview the hotel where they will be staying.

Broadband is a revolutionary tool that will become a standard device for people to have in their homes once the technology is made available and affordable.

SHARING OUR VISIONS

Collected Quotes from Malden High

"Maybe someday, the use of telephones will be non-existent because everyone will be talking through the Internet."

— Genevieve Ferratusco

"Everyone will talk through their PCs and even be able to see the person they're talking to on their screen. Everyone will have a digital camera and no one will be able to imagine that some time ago people had to wait several minutes just to connect to the Internet."

— Yelena Khodush

"This technology is going to affect my life in a good way. When I graduate from Malden High, I will not have to get up in the morning to go to work. Instead, I will stay home to do my job, and work at my own pace."

— Suzette Belony

"With broadband, companies could employ people from all over the world, no matter where they live. Communication could all be done with some sort of virtual meeting room."

— Christopher Parker

"As we live in the information age, with new products and discoveries coming to us every day, we must remember to use our best judgment to decide what technologies are good, and which could be harmful. We must also remember that whatever technology does to our lives, technology, in itself, is not to blame, but rather how we use it."

— David Fazio

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

by Felicia M. Sullivan


*T*he future is not about technology. It's about people. For a community media center it's about people harnessing technology to provide meaningful content to their community.

Lowell Telecommunications Corporation is a community media center serving the diverse urban population of Lowell, Massachusetts. Since its inception, the organization, like many other such centers, has committed itself to first-come, first-served telecommunication services to anyone in the community interested in expressing themselves. It is also committed to providing training and access to the media communication skills of the 21st century. The organization's vision has always been about telecommunications' technology—everything from video cameras to computers, from cable channels to the Internet—and suiting its uses to community information and content production. In the summer of 1998, after three years of providing training and access to thousands of residents, the organization reaffirmed that its mission was to "build community through technology." Since that time the organization has become committed to decentralizing its services and working even more actively with our community partners in realizing our community media and information needs.

As Lowell begins the process of refranchising with AT&T Broadband and begins a new contract with RCN, our visions for the future are still firmly focussed in our original core beliefs. While new technologies come and go and our learning curves become ever faster, LTC's mission is still to serve its community. Yet a digital world that is realizing the long hyped convergence of all media does bring with it some fantastic dreams or at least some interesting questions. For instance, once the majority of media becomes digital (delivered through all sorts of conduits), how will a local media center make the case for local content when all content is potentially global? How do we begin demanding access to more than bandwidth in a world where media storage and web portals are becoming equally crucial infrastructure to access to distribution? How do we confront the potential glut of content that will be available once all those worldwide producers pump it out there, and who will guide us to that content?

For LTC and its community, our future is one in which access to media distribution networks in whatever form they may take are open to communities and are without commercial intent. It is also a future in which funding from the whole range of mega-media/telecommunication conglomerates making huge profits from our public airwaves, public rights of way, and even aerospace are required to give back to community media and information endeavors not only in the United States, but around the globe. It is a future in which visual, media and technology literacy are just as important as traditional literacy and where our centers work with schools and the community to ensure that this becomes a reality. LTC also sees a future where the distinction between a PEG access center, a community technology center, a media arts center, a telemedia center, a free speech organization, a cyberartist hangout, a community center and countless other nomenclature melt away as we all explore, learn, make and share information, content, knowledge and each others company.

Felicia Sullivan is director of the Lowell Community Technology Consortium [www.ltc.org]. Contact her at consortium@ltc.org



SHARING
VISIONS
THOUGHTS FROM
THE FIELD

BERKS COMMUNITY TELEVISION

Editor's Note: Berks Community Television was one of the first interactive TV experiments. Jointly sponsored by the National Science Foundation, New York University's Alternative Media Center, and the city of Reading PA, the system was started in 1976 with a focus on connecting elderly, and somewhat homebound, citizens to local government. The system includes the wiring of a number of locations to permit dialogue between citizens and government and among citizen groups. BCTV raises 51 percent of its budget from community contributions (memberships, annual auction, program underwriting, etc.) and a wide range of community organizations sponsor and produce its programming. It publishes a comprehensive annual program guide. Visit BCTV at www.bctv.org.

by Ann Sheehan

Berks Community Television has always been an "interactive" system. That is, when we telecast live programming, which we do Monday through Friday, people watching at home can interact with the program hosts and guests simply by picking up their telephones. Every Friday morning we do a two-way audio, two-way video interactive program, *Bridging the Generation Gap*, with students in their high school studio talking to folks here at BCTV. They see and talk to each other using our split-screen capabilities, and people at home can talk to people in our studio and/or the students at school via telephone. We have not yet incorporated Internet capabilities into our system on a regular basis, but we will, as the community information needs change.

One of the reasons that BCTV has been successful over the past 25 years is that it's local and it's real. When this system was inaugurated in 1976 our cable system had 12 channels; now there are over 60, and eventually our system and every other system in the country will have too many for anyone to watch with any consistency. Berks County is served by network (commercial and public broadcasting) affiliates located in Lancaster, York, Allentown, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg. There is no network affiliate located here, but there are two television news outlets. One is managed by the cable company (AT&T Broadband) and one is affiliated with an Allentown station. BCTV made a con-

scious and deliberate decision several years ago when the news programs were getting started, to not try to compete with local news. We can't. We don't have the resources to do daily newscasts. We do have the resources to do excellent community programming, and that is what we do, as it fits our mission: To enhance the unity and strength of the community by providing a medium for community dialogue and educational opportunities; To be a source of information of local, national and international origin; To be a forum for the exchange of ideas on issues and topics of community interest.

Sometimes it's necessary to remind people that "community" is our middle name, and that's what we're about. Cable television is the tool we currently use to deliver the message to most people in Berks County. BCTV began as an experiment in cable-delivered interactive programming, when public access television was in its early development. The experiment was one of three nationwide that were funded by the National Science Foundation. The Reading [Pennsylvania] experiment was administered by New York University's Alternate Media Center under the direction of Red Burns. In 1977 when the federal funding ended, the project became a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. The basic idea behind the experiment was that ordinary people could learn how to use the medium of television to communicate with one another.

BCTV has always been about people and about the Berks County community. In an area that is served, as noted above, by network and public broadcasting affiliates, Berks Community Television is the only local television facility whose mission is to serve the information needs of the Berks County community, the only local source of unfiltered information. BCTV offers people the opportunity to use television as a tool to be more than passive receivers of produced information. Through live interactive programs produced by volunteers, BCTV brings to the community the best possible educational and informational programs and provides the opportunity for volunteer activities. BCTV offers Berks County an opportunity for public discourse, a neutral



NO MORE BORDERS, NO MORE MILES IN THE NETWORKED GEOCOMMUNITY

by **Chuck Sherwood**

The recent 6th Advanced Networks Workshops, "The Networked Nation/Une nation branchée" in Montreal, sponsored by Canarie, Inc., has focused my thinking about how access centers will need to reinvent themselves in the face of coming changes in telecommunications technology and policy.

Over the past five years, while centers have been building web-sites and getting PEG Access channels online through fairly simple technology, DSL Megabit pipes, global advanced networks or infrastructure, funded by commercial providers and governments, have been constructed. Commercial, research and education applications that use these Gigabit pipes have been developed and content has been demonstrated. The non-commercial players in the development of the next generation Internet or optical networks are the same players who developed the Internet. The R 1 (Research 1) Universities in the US and Canada, as well as other research universities around the world, are taking the lead.

But what does this all mean for the community media and technology community? Since the largest source of funding for PEG access operations and capital is the franchise fee, how is this going to be affected by this new environment that is being constructed around us? The Telecommunications Act of 1996 has eliminated barriers to the delivery of voice, video and data by the cable and telephone companies as well as their competitors. This convergence has generally been viewed as positive since these new services have added new revenue sources to the formula for calculating gross revenue. Many municipalities have come to understand that one of the most valuable resources that they control is the public rights-of-way (PROW) and have passed telecommunications ordinances to insure that they receive proper compensation from the cable, phone and telecommunications providers. But will this last? The 9th Circuit Court decision in the Portland, Oregon case defined Internet service as a Title II or telecommunications service. Several of the cable companies are now using this decision to try to find more profit by backing away from their commitments.

One of the major themes of the Alliance 2000 Tucson conference was that we are going to have a telecommunications policy reform effort to deal with in the 107th Congress. But who are the telecom players that we will be up against? Our new adversaries include telecommunications, utility, gas pipeline, satellite and wireless companies delivering voice, video, and data services. All of the providers that use the PROW or sites tower or transmitters in a community will now or soon be able to compete with one another. The December 2000 issue of *Broadband Week* lists 83 providers and 17 broadband backbone companies. This represents a huge lobby-

ing effort that the Alliance, CTCNet and NATOA and our allies will have to go up against.

How can we prepare for this multi-year struggle on the horizon? We start with our own communities by working to ensure that telecommunication funding and infrastructure will be used for community and economic development. Many communities are going through a visioning process to begin to understand the implications of the new global digital economy and PEG access centers are in the ideal position to raise issues as part of a telecommunication planning process. For 25 years it has been part of our mission to provide distance learning, and programming that facilitates community dialogue and connects citizens to government. Now we need to expand our mission to areas such as workforce development and begin the migration of these services to the Internet.

Many municipalities, counties and states have begun to understand the importance of broadband networks and are financing and building on existing I-Nets, often in partnership with the private sector and universities.

One of the most progressive American examples of community networking is Palo Alto, California. They are building a network that starts at the house or apartment building and moves back to the gateway. The residents and businesses of Palo Alto thus have multiple choices of local and long distance telephone services, cable TV operators and ISP and data line providers. A statewide example is the Massachusetts Community Network, which is being built by a Cisco backed company, Digital Broadband, that is partnering with Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunications (MCET) and University of Massachusetts and using their backbone to provide voice, video and data services to town halls, school districts and libraries. These users are the prime tenants on the network but since there will be points of presence (POPs) in all 351 municipalities in Massachusetts, Digital Broadband will also provide services to local businesses. This initiative thus overcomes digital divide issues for small rural communities by putting them on a level playing field with the metropolitan parts of the state.

By starting in our own communities and then building regional and statewide coalitions, we can begin to insure that the elected and appointed officials, their lawyers and consultants understand that franchising is no longer about clear reception of television signals, but is about community development and economic development. It is through this process that we will indeed become a Networked GeoCommunity.

Chuck Sherwood is the chair of the Northeast Region of the Alliance and is a senior partner in Community Media Visioning Partners. Contact him at hanwood@capecod.net

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

6th Advanced Network Workshop, Montreal, Canada, sponsored by Canarie, Inc—
www.canarie.ca/advnet/workshop_2000/workshopinfo.html/

1st Community Network Global 2000 Conference, Barcelona, Spain—www.cnglobal2000.org/

4th International Conference on Technology Policy & Innovation, Curitiba, Brazil—www.cits.br/curitiba2000/

10th Internet Society Conference iGRID 2000, Yokohama, Japan—www.startup.net/igrid2000/

Massachusetts Community Network, www.masscommunity.net

FREEDOM & COMMUNITY

STAYING RELEVANT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

by Dirk Koning

Stories will always need to be told. Money will always need to be made. Messages will always seek an audience. Voices will always vie to be heard. Songs will always need singers.

What role, if any, will community media have in the burgeoning future of the microcosm and telecosm? What if Access ceases to be a cause? What if cost diminishes to match need? What if bandwidth is unlimited and becomes commodified and free?

What do we uniquely provide?

Freedom in a word. Freedom from market force “success” based on return. Freedom from “cost effective” consolidation of labor and capital for profit. Freedom from “time is money” messages that compress reality for effect. Freedom from mass appeal. Freedom to fail. Freedom to target niche markets. Freedom to be unpopular yet distributed. Freedom to express fears fearlessly. Freedom to have the search justify itself. Freedom to preserve culture, language and minority views. Freedom from “price per minute” schemes. Freedom from top down control. Freedom from the pap of global consolidation. Freedom from the medium being the message. Freedom to have the medium be the message. Freedom to be disturbing.

How will we perpetuate this freedom in an expanding and chaotic world constantly being designed to “brand” us while dangle “freedom” as a purchasable commodity?

Content. Content. Content. It seems the conduit is becoming increasingly ubiquitous. A bit is a bit is a bit whether it traverses the air as an electron wave or a photon particle, and curses through antiquated copper lines or fiber optic filaments. Why should we care how it reaches an ear, eye or flesh?

Our richness is in Community and Freedom. If, “all politics are local” then what of “all media”? Will time and space rebound as critical life factors? Will geographic proximity continue to have mea-

surable effects on love, life and commerce? Will the exponential growth of more media amplify the value of local, local, local? You betcha!

How do we stay focused on the “meat of the message” and not follow the trend to have the sheer consumption of the message “be the meat”? Are lives based on having less free than lives based on either doing or being as William James suggested? How do we capture hearts when capturing “eyeballs” is the mantra? Why do we deserve to survive? Will we cross the line of direct media input into brains and bodies? Will we wake up one day with our mission fulfilled and be done? Unlikely!

Trust seems to be another attribute we can claim. Who can you trust to give you the facts on equipment, technology, programming, and education? What of motive? If media centers keep motives clear—to share as opposed to seeing what the market will bear—we can stay relevant. If we promote the message as the message, not the medium as the message, we will stay relevant. If we use media as a social development tool, we will remain relevant. If we define ourselves and not let ourselves be defined by corporate media, we will remain relevant. If we constantly ask our communities what they need and then deliver, we will remain relevant. If we preserve our community’s aural and visual history through community archives, we will remain relevant. If we assist non-profit groups in achieving their mission we will remain relevant. If we put people first and technology second, we will remain relevant. If we commit to paying living wages, we will remain relevant. If we keep community boards focused on mission instead of management minutia, we will remain relevant. If we are willing to reinvent ourselves to serve, we will remain relevant.

This multi-media, digital future seems to be cluttered with new products, soothsayers and pitfalls. No one really seems to have a handle on societal

effects from the information revolution. The adage that seems to shine through is, “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” Dot COMs seem to be losing their newby luster and many are just plain going down the dot toilet. Email has changed the way we communicate but I still don’t write my Mom enough. It may easily take a full generation for any perspective to surface as fact.

I am more optimistic about the future these days than I have been in the past. Maybe the longer we live the more relative perspective we acquire. As I see libraries continuing to be used and funded, I realize the media centers can and should be folded into the fabric of a community as a critical institution. We should just be careful to not be “institutionalized.”

After one of our recent orientation sessions at the Community Media Center where we cover all the rules and responsibilities and liabilities, etc., I had a cocky 17-year-old come up to me and say, “Mr. Koning, I believe you have created the institution my generation will be forced to dismantle.” Punk. My first instinct was to extricate his Adam’s apple from his throat. But I remained calm and realized that the world works that way. (I ended up coopting him by hiring him into the institution he wants to dismantle.) Anyway, we have had the good fortune to get a decade or two of development under our belts and we need to stay focused on the things that matter most. Freedom and Community. Power to the People.

“The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.”

—Thomas Jefferson

Dirk Koning is executive director of the Community Media Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Contact him at dirk@grcmc.org

THE NEW STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PEG MANAGEMENT!

Facil is software designed just for media access centers, addressing their wide range of needs from contact information to equipment inventory, from equipment and facility reservations to project budgeting and reporting, from program library to channel scheduling. Highly automated and fully integrated, this program makes all the information available throughout your organization to every staff member in real time.

After more than ten years of development and incorporating the input of PEG access centers across the country, Facil has evolved into the most comprehensive and effective solution to the exceptional data management requirements of a media access center. The new Windows based version of Facil is already serving organizations from coast to coast, recovering the staff time previously lost to paperwork and improving service levels.

Facil

*Data Management
Software for
Media Access Centers*

- facility scheduling
- program library
- channel scheduling
- account for usage by person, project, and organization

**Now in use at over 50 access
centers nationwide!**

For more information: Access Tucson | 124 E. Broadway | Tucson, AZ 85701
520.624.9833 | facil-info@access.tucson.org | <http://access.tucson.org/facil>

25TH
1976
2001
ANNIVERSARY



**Alliance For
Community Media**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

*Celebrating 25 Years
of Ensuring Everyone's Access
to Electronic Media*

*July 11-14, 2001
The Renaissance Hotel
Washington, DC*

JUST A FEW HIGHLIGHTS

- *25th Anniversary Gala Cruise
on the Spirit of Washington*
- *"Educating Your Legislator"*
- *Storm the Hill Congressional Visits*
- *Renaissance Hotel in the heart of the city*
- *Only blocks from the Monuments*
- *8 Conference Tracks*
- *International Reception*
- *Hometown Video Festival 2001*
- *Expanded Trade Show*
- *Youth Media Camp*
- *Conference room rate \$125 single/double*

*For more information about the 2001 Conference,
contact the Alliance national office at 202.393.2650,
by email at acm@alliancecm.org, or visit the
Alliance website at www.alliancecm.org.*



CLASSIC ARTS SHOWCASE

Performing • Visual • Film

"Classic MTV"

- Free classic arts programming
- Downlinked from Satellite G1R-5
- For your PBS or non-commercial channel
- Available unscrambled, 24 hours a day
- A new 8 hour show (shown 3 times a day) every week
- The best professional public service programming on the air
- Fantastic viewer response

If you can receive C-Band satellite transmissions you can do an air check of Classic Arts Showcase right now. Just tune into Satellite Galaxy 1R-5 and watch our free program whenever you like – we're always on. You will see clip after clip of great classic arts performances, with absolutely no commercials, ever.

Classic Arts Showcase is a gift from the Lloyd E. Rigler - Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation, created in an effort to increase interest in the arts. There will never be any charge for Classic Arts Showcase.

Fill out the application, fax it back to us, and you can start re-broadcasting CAS today. Your viewers will love us.

CLASSIC ARTS SHOWCASE

Charlie Mount, Distribution

PO Box 828 • Burbank, CA 91503

(323) 878-0283 • Fax (323) 878-0329

cmcasmail@earthlink.net

Visit us at www.classicartsshowcase.org

Do an air check of CAS right now.

Tune to Satellite Galaxy 1R-5.

(133° West/C-Band/Horizontal FRQ. 3800 MHz)

Continuous Video Clips from the Worlds of

BALLET

OPERA

ARCHITECTURAL ART

CHORAL AND
CHAMBER MUSIC

DANCE

FOLK ART

ANIMATION

MUSICAL THEATRE

SOLO INSTRUMENT

ORCHESTRAL

CLASSIC FILM

MUSEUM ART

ARCHIVAL
DOCUMENTARY

Cable Channel Automation Solutions

MVP-2000 Digital Video Player

The One Rack Unit Head End

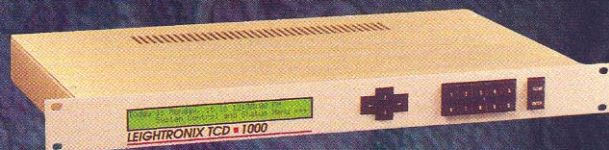
MPEG Video/Audio Playback • PRO-BUS Control for up to 16 VCRs/LDPs/DVDs • 4x3VAA Routing Switcher with Video Detection • Control for Select External Routing Switchers • Network Access and Control



TCD-1000 Event Controller

Ideal for Expanding Systems

LGX-BUS & PRO-BUS Control for up to 64 VCRs/LDPs/DVDs • Control for Select External Routing Switchers up to 99x64 • GPI Inputs & Outputs



PRO-16 Event Controller

The All-In-One Playback Solution

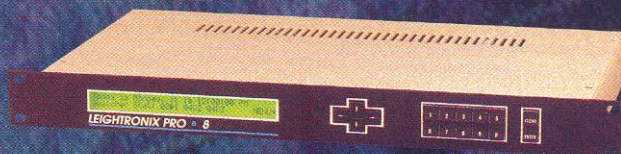
PRO-BUS Control for up to 16 VCRs/LDPs/DVDs • Internal 16x4VAA Routing Switcher with Video Detection • WinEM-LT Scheduling Software Included



PRO-8 Event Controller

A Smaller Version of the PRO-16

PRO-BUS Control for up to 16 VCRs/LDPs/DVDs • Internal 8x3VAA Routing Switcher with Video Detection • WinEM-LT Scheduling Software Included



MINI-T-PRO Event Controller

The Low-Cost Playback Solution

PRO-BUS Control for up to 16 VCRs/LDPs/DVDs • Internal 8x1VA Routing Switcher with Video Detection • WinEM-LT Scheduling Software Included



Specializing in cable television automation since 1985

LEIGHTRONIX, INC.

CONTROL PRODUCTS

info@leightronix.com • www.leightronix.com • (800) 243-5589

The Annenberg/CPB Channel



Unparalleled educational programming, available 24/7.
Use a lot or a little to round out your schedule. It's free.

Contact Dana Rouse at 1-800-228-8030 ext. 4 or channel@learner.org

www.learner.org/channel

COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

Community Media Center
711 Bridge St. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504-7514



Printed on
Recycled Paper

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage

PAID

Grand Rapids, MI
Permit 918